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ABSTRACT

A study investigated the effectiveness of a method for improving the writing skills and attitude through increased writing experiences. The targeted population consisted of second-, third-, and fourth-grade students in two adjacent, stable, middle-class suburban communities northwest of Chicago, Illinois. The lack of skills and motivation of students to express themselves and communicate in writing was documented by data revealing the quality and quantity of student writing as well as information gathered from surveys concerning student attitude. Analysis of the probable cause data revealed students exhibiting a reluctance to write were due to infrequent modeling by significant adults, past experiences, and overly structured leisure time. Colleagues supported the notion that there is a lack of adequate time for writing due to crowded daily schedules. They also believed the expectations generated by the Illinois Goal Assessment Program (IGAP) standards cause excessive emphasis on a formalized method of instruction and stifle the joy of writing. A review of solution strategies suggested by knowledgeable others, combined with an analysis of the problem setting, resulted in the selection of three major strategies of intervention: implementation of writers' workshop methods, emphasis on journal writing, and assessment of artifacts in portfolio collections. Post intervention data indicated that writing skills and attitudes were positively impacted. (Contains 29 references, and 1 table and 18 figures of data. Appendixes present numerous survey instruments, lesson plans, and writing prompts.) (Author/RS)

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IMPROVING STUDENT WRITING SKILLS AND ATTITUDE THROUGH THE INCREASE OF WRITING EXPERIENCES

by

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Master's of Arts in
Teaching and Leadership

Saint Xavier University & IRI/Skylight
Field-Based Master's Program

Action Research Final Report
Site: Palatine, IL
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THIS WORK IS
DEDICATED
TO OUR MOTHERS

ASTRID, GERTRUDE,
JULIA, AND MARGARET

WHO FIRST
OPENED TO US
THE WORLD OF WORDS

Abstract

AUTHORS: Lynn Edwards
Sharon Hamick
Joyce Mackert
Kristine Walsh

SITE: Palatine

DATE: April, 1995

TITLE: Improving Student Writing Skills and Attitude Through the Increase of Writing Experiences

ABSTRACT: This report describes a program for improving writing skills and attitude through increased writing experiences. The targeted population consists of second, third, and fourth grade students in two adjacent, stable, middle class, suburban communities northwest of Chicago, Illinois. The lack of skills and motivation of the students to express themselves and communicate in writing will be documented by data revealing the quality and quantity of student writing as well as information gathered from surveys concerning student attitude.

Analysis of probable cause reveals students exhibiting a reluctance to write due to infrequent modeling by significant adults, past experiences, and overly structured leisure time. Colleagues support the notion that there is a lack of adequate time for writing due to crowded daily schedules. They also believe the expectations generated by the Illinois Goal Assessment Program (IGAP) standards cause excessive emphasis on a formalized method of instruction and stifle the joy of writing.

A review of solution strategies suggested by knowledgeable others, combined with an analysis of the problem setting, resulted in the selection of three major categories of intervention: implementation of writers' workshop methods, emphasis on journal writing, and assessment of artifacts in portfolio collections.

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Chapter 1

PROBLEM STATEMENT AND COMMUNITY BACKGROUND

General Statement of Problem

The targeted students in second and third grade at Fairview School in Mount Prospect and the fourth grade students at Westgate and Saint James Schools in Arlington Heights lack the skills and motivation to express themselves and communicate in writing as evidenced by teacher observation, and the quantity and quality of writing products.

Description of Immediate Problem Context

Fairview School is an elementary school comprised of kindergarten through fifth grade. The district operating expenditure per pupil is $6,115. The total enrollment at Fairview is 345 students with an average class size of 22. All classrooms are self-contained. Classes are like-age, heterogeneously grouped. The students at Fairview School are 95.4 percent White, with the remaining minority made up of Black, Hispanic, and Asian/Pacific Islander. Only nine-tenths of one percent of the school population is considered low-income. Two percent of the students are classified as limited-English proficient and are eligible for bilingual education. The attendance rate is high at 95.8 percent with no chronic truants. The mobility rate is low at just over five percent.

Built in 1950, Fairview School is an aging, out-of-date facility. Classrooms are smaller than state recommendations and are not easily

adapted for current teaching practices and strategies. The Learning Resource Center and Computer Lab combination is a series of four regular classrooms that were adapted for this use. The computer lab is equipped with 12 Apple II E and four Macintosh computers (networked to printers) allowing whole class instruction. Each classroom has one Apple II E computer but no printer. Limited electrical outlets inhibit use and placement of the computer and other electrical equipment. The building's electrical system is not adequate to support modern technology.

The Fairview staff consists of 38 people. Of these 38, five are male (two full-time and one half-time teacher, two custodians). One staff member is Asian and the rest are White. There are 25 certified teachers, one principal, and 12 support personnel, including day care staff, custodial staff, secretary, nurses, library and special education aides. Of the 25 certified teachers, eight are instructors of music, physical education, and art or provide support in the areas of learning disabilities and behavioral disabilities, speech and language, gifted, bilingual, Chapter One reading, and library resource. The Northwest Suburban Special Education Organization (NSSEO) provides training and support for the staff and students involved in inclusion. The average teaching experience at Fair view is 20 years with one third of the certified staff having obtained advanced degrees. The average salary of teachers is $42,565 and that of administrators is $67,715.

Fairview School has no formal writing curriculum, although each child is provided with a language arts textbook. The district has developed language arts learner outcomes that have guidelines dealing with written expression. The suggested time allotment for language arts does not specify the number of minutes that should be spent on writing activities. Teachers implement their own

writing programs according to their teaching style and comfort level. Preparing students for the Illinois Goal Assessment Program (IGAP) seems to be the focus of most writing assignments.

Westgate School is in Arlington Heights, District 25. It has an Early Childhood program with five classrooms, 11 kindergarten through fifth grade classrooms, and also 9 ungraded or multi-age classrooms. Average class sizes at Westgate School are: 22.3 at kindergarten, 25 at first grade, 23.7 at second grade, 21.4 at grade three, 20.3 at grade four, and 23 at fifth grade.

In addition to classroom teachers, a principal, and secretary, there are one full-time and one part-time teachers of music, physical education, and visual art. There are one teacher and one full-time aide in the learning resource center and one teacher of the gifted students. There are also two teachers and one full-time aide in the learning disabilities and behavior disorder classroom. Westgate School has one Chapter One reading teacher and five teaching assistants. There are also two teachers for the students with English as a second language, a social worker, and a nurse. The school utilizes three speech and language pathologists as well as two psychologists. The Early Childhood program receives additional help from seven special education teaching assistants. Non-certified personnel include three clerical assistants, two full-time and one part-time custodian, one food service person and five lunch/playground supervisors.

Ninety-one and nine-tenths percent of the 556 students are white, and eight and one-tenth percent of the school population is made up of Black, Hispanic, and Asian/Pacific Islander students. In Westgate School four and seven-tenths percent of the students are from low income families and five and two-tenths percent of the students have limited English proficiency. The student

attendance rate is 96.2 percent and student mobility, which is based on the number of times students enroll or leave a school during the school year, is nine and four-tenths percent. There is no chronic truancy.

Of the district's 258 teachers, 17.4 percent are male and 82.6 percent are female. Ninety-nine and two-tenths percent of the teachers are white, while eight-tenths percent are Asian/Pacific Islander. The average teaching experience is 17.5 years. Forty-five and four-tenths percent are teaching with a bachelor's degree, and 54.6 percent are teachers with a master's degree or above. The pupil-teacher ratio within the district is 17.9:1 which is slightly lower than the state's ratio of 19.7:1. The average teacher's salary in 1992-93 was $45,002, while the average administrator had a salary of $73,158. The operating expenditure per pupil is $6,218.

Since the beginning of IGAP, Arlington Heights, District 25 has been working on improving student writing. In the 1990-91 school years, Westgate School created a writing curriculum to address this problem. Teachers have been using this curriculum and collecting writing samples which are placed in student portfolios. Teachers, however, have not received sufficient inservice training to become expert writing teachers. Writing of narrative, persuasive, and expository essays has become very formal with little sign of creativity.

St. James Day School is a traditional Roman Catholic institution. It is comprised of elementary and junior high buildings each located on opposite sides of the main north-south street, Arlington Heights Road, which bisects Arlington Heights, a northwest suburb of Chicago. The grade school building was erected in 1930 and the junior high was first occupied in 1967. In addition to the regular classrooms, the schools collectively contain an art room, two physical education spaces, a library, a learning lab, a band room, a science lab,

a music room, and the recent addition of a computer lab outfitted with 20 computers.

The present enrollment of this K-8 school is 812 students. Of those enrolled, 790 are Caucasian, 11 are Asian, six are Hispanic, and five are black. Ninety-seven percent of the students reside within Arlington Heights with the remaining three percent coming from various other surrounding suburbs. Seven buses transport those residing one and a half miles or more away at no cost. The average daily enrollment is 98 percent.

Homeroom classes are heterogeneously grouped and the average size is 27. Fourth through eighth grades are departmentalized and classes are 40 minutes in length. There is movement toward whole class instruction in these grades while ability grouping still exists for mathematics classes.

Presently there are five half-day kindergarten classes, first through third grade each have four classrooms, and three classrooms for each of the other grades. As enrollment warrants it, classes are added. Waiting lists exist for kindergarten, second, and fourth grades.

The school is funded primarily by tuition. It has increased from $1210 last year to $1300 this school year. Per capita yearly education cost has averaged $1670.

The school is administered by a full-time principal who is responsible to the parish pastor and the Parish Education Committee. There is an assistant principal in the junior high who teaches part-time.

The faculty numbers 35 full-time teachers and nine special education or support staff people consisting of a band/music teacher, two physical education teachers, a learning disabilities specialist, and a librarian. For the primary grades there are three paid aides and one half-time paid tutor. In addition,

there are 30 regular volunteers and five occasional ones.

The male-female ratio of the faculty is two to 43. The average age of the full-time personnel is 42 years. The average salary is $21,800. Seven teachers have master's degrees while another seven are working toward a graduate degree. Of these, four are halfway completed or beyond.

School curriculum is teacher developed within archdiocesan guidelines and based around national publishers' basal series. These textbooks remain current as they are replaced on a five year rotating subject cycle and chosen by a selection committee of teachers.

California Achievement Tests are given yearly in grades three, five, and seven. Achievement has been in the 85-88 percentile range most recently. Another assessment tool used is the high school district's entrance exam . Of the sixteen area public and private feeder schools taking the most recent test, Saint James ranked second in language arts, first in reading and math, and first overall.

The writing program at St. James School is basically unstructured leaving implementation to the individual teachers. At the fourth grade level writing is interspersed throughout the year in all subjects being more specifically taught in language and reading classes. The language textbook is used for teaching mechanics and parts of speech while teacher developed units cover manners, poetry, creative writing, and tall tales.

Description of Surrounding Communities

Mount Prospect, Illinois is a suburban community located about 22 miles northwest of Chicago's Loop. It is a residential community with no heavy industry, some light industry, several office park complexes, and a major

shopping center which provide jobs. Village property taxes are comparatively low due to the revenues generated by these businesses. Many Mount Prospect residents commute to work using the Northwestern train whose tracks run through the center of the village.

Mount Prospect's population, according to the 1990 census, is 53,170 with 100 percent of the population living in an urban environment. The community is predominantly White (47,943) with Hispanics (3,224), Asian/Pacific Islanders (3,421), Blacks (549), American Indians (185) and other(1,072) making up the remainder of the population. The total population is fairly evenly divided between men (26,368) and women (26,802). The gender breakdown in the population under eleven years of age is 4,441 boys and 4,096 girls.

Mount Prospect is an upper middle class community whose citizens value education, benefit from a high rate of employment, and purchase homes. The educational attainment of the population, 18 years and older, is:

Less than ninth grade	2,733
Ninth to twelfth grade, no diploma	3,771
High school graduate (includes equivalency)	11,101
Some college, no degree	9,502
Associate degree	2,537
Bachelor's degree	9,265
Graduate or professional degree	3,097

Of the population 16 years and older, 30,621 are employed and 1,034 are unemployed with 11,429 not in the labor force. The median per capita income is $20,345 and $46,508 per household according to 1989 figures. The majority of homes in the community were built between 1950 and 1984. The median value of an owner occupied house is $155,100.

Mount Prospect School District 57 is one of four school districts within the

boundaries of the village. It consists of one junior high and three elementary buildings. School revenues come almost entirely from property taxes, because most commercial and business areas are located outside the district. Fair view School is the only elementary school in the northern quadrant of the district. It is surrounded by quiet streets and single family houses. A small number of students live in the few scattered apartments located within the school's boundaries while most of the students live in single family houses.

Westgate School is on the south side of the northwest suburban community of Arlington Heights, Illinois. While the children of Saint James School come from several northwest suburbs, the vast majority of them live in Arlington Heights where the parish and its school are located.

The present population within this village is 75,460, 68 percent of which is Roman Catholic. There are a total of 30,428 housing units with 68.7 percent being owner occupied. The average home value is $182,518, while the average rent is $655.

The average age in Arlington Heights is 36.7 years. Eighty-nine and nine-tenths percent of the population have a high school education, while 39.5 percent have a college education. There are many opportunities for educational experiences available in the Arlington Heights area including two community colleges and one university.

The total number of people employed is 46,877. Forty-three and three-tenths percent hold jobs as managers or professionals. Sales and administration jobs employ 35.3 percent. Arlington Heights has six industrial office parks which house more than 300 firms including Texas Instruments and Honeywell. The largest employer in Arlington Heights is Motorola. Proximity to both Chicago and O'Hare Airport has also had an impact on population and

employment. The average household income is $59,647. The unemployment rate is two and seven-tenths percent.

Regional and National Context of Problem

The 1992 "Writing Report Card" prepared by the U.S. Education Department's National Assessment of Educational Progress found that even though schools have increased the emphasis on writing instruction and most students know the basics, many students continue to have serious difficulty producing effective writing. Illinois has recognized and addressed this concern since 1989 by setting expectations for personal narrative, persuasive, and expository styles of writing for life-long communication. As a result of IGAP testing, most of the focus of writing instruction has been the teaching of these three styles.

Due to the emphasis on this formalized approach, children seem to have lost the joy of writing. Lucy McCormick Calkins (1986) stated:

> But in our schools, our students tell us they don't want to write. They need not bother to tell us: we can feel their apathy as they crank out stories that are barely adequate...The bitter irony is that we, in schools, set up roadblocks to stifle the natural and enduring reasons for writing, and then we complain that our students don't want to write. (pp. 3-4)

She claims that knowing the characteristics of this formalized approach has little to do with developing the skills to enthusiastically produce creative products.

> In the past, many teachers did not view writing as a complex developmental process. They were more concerned with the finished product, which they evaluated without regard to the way it was produced. Teachers seldom looked beyond surface features-the weaknesses of

spelling, punctuation, grammar, and usage. Some, instead of offering just enough help when it was needed, took control away from beginning writers (Griffiths, 1992, p.7).

Learning to write is hard work and therefore needs to be taught well!

Chapter 2

PROBLEM EVIDENCE AND PROBABLE CAUSE

Problem Evidence

Both subjective and objective means were used to document the evidence of merely adequate writing skills. During the first week of school, a writing prompt (Appendix A) was administered to the targeted students. Attitudes of students, colleagues, and parents were explored through the use of surveys (Appendices B-D).

After an allotted time of fifteen minutes to respond to the writing prompt, the words were counted and recorded. The results for each class are shown in Figures 1-4.

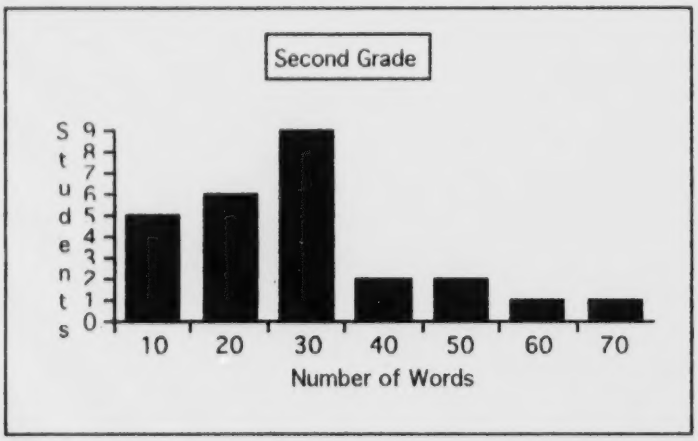

Figure 1

Number of Words Written During a 15 Minute Writing Prompt

The 25 targeted second grade students wrote between four and 64 words with most students writing 30 words or less. Based on the experience of the teacher, this was indicative of beginning second grade students. The number of words written were recorded in increments of ten to facilitate the production of the graph. Records of the exact number of words written by each student were kept by the teacher.

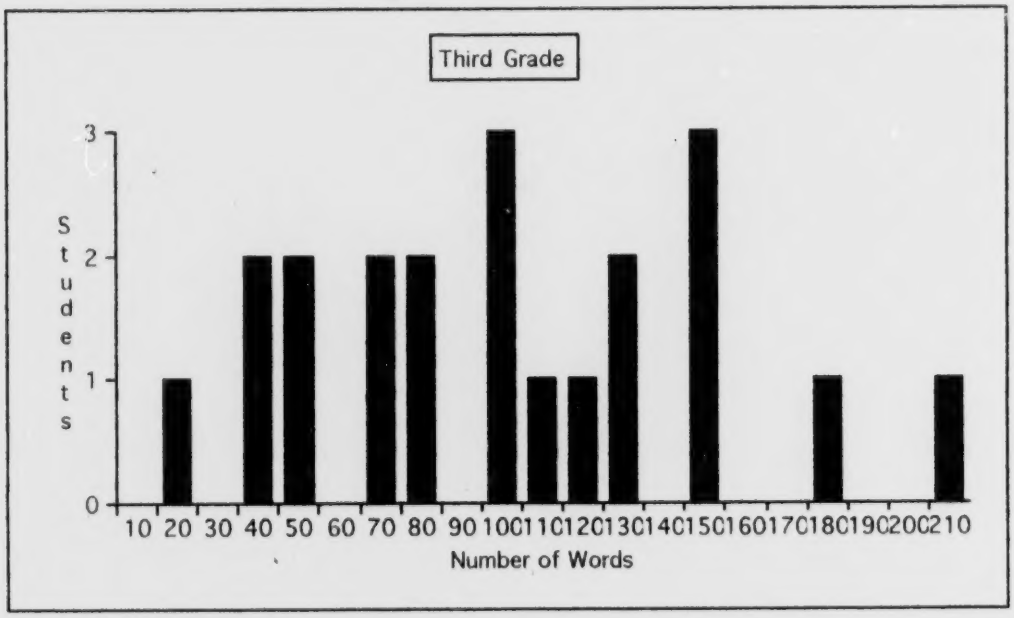

Figure 2

Number of Words Written During a 15 Minute Writing Prompt

The 21 targeted third grade students wrote between 20 and 210 words. The scores were scattered over the spectrum. Relying on past experience of the teacher, the wide range of the number of words written per student was not expected. Over half of this class wrote more than 91 words. This also was surprising because previous third grade students did not produce such quantity

this early in the school year. The number of words written were recorded in increments of ten to facilitate the production of the graph. Records of the exact number of words written by each student were kept by the teacher.

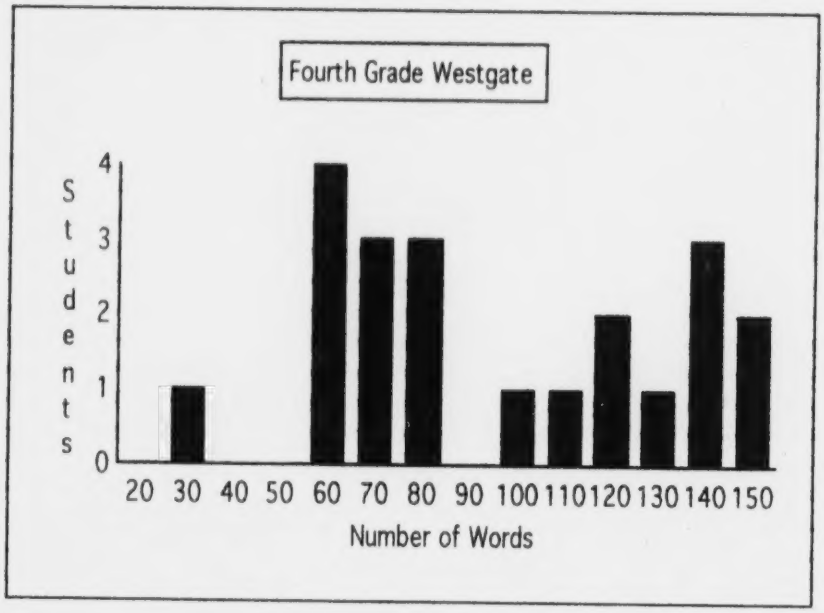

Figure 3

Number of Words Written During a 15 Minute Writing Prompt

The 21 targeted fourth grade students at Westgate wrote between 27 and 149 words. All but one student wrote 51 words or more. The high number of words written may be due to the extensive incorporation of writing activities in the primary grades to prepare for the IGAP writing tests . The number of words written were recorded in increments of ten to facilitate the production of the graph. Records of the exact number of words written by each student were kept by the teacher.

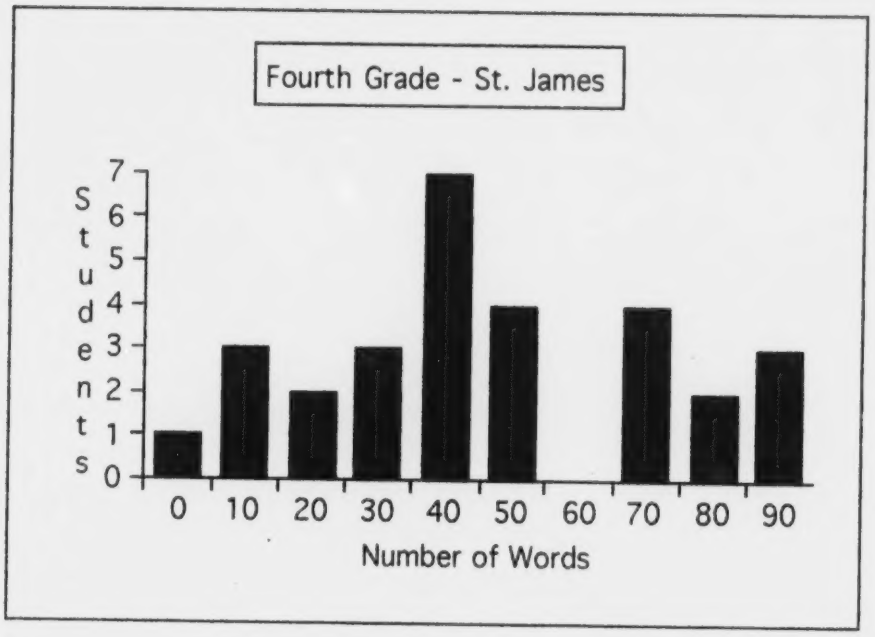

Figure 4

Number of Words Written During a 15 Minute Writing Prompt

The 28 targeted fourth grade students at St. James wrote between nine and 139 words. Most of the students were clustered around the median of the graph. Based on the previous experience of the teacher, this clustering is what was expected at the beginning of fourth grade. The number of words written were recorded in increments of ten to facilitate the production of the graph. Records of the exact number of words written by each student were kept by the teacher.

Grades four through eight at St. James are departmentalized, and these students are in one of the language arts classes. Of the four targeted classes, this is the only one that is not self-contained.

The writing prompt was also scored according to the IGAP Writing

Development Chart (Appendix E). Students' writings were evaluated only by the classroom teacher. Scores may have been affected by the subjective application of this chart by each teacher. The results for each class are shown in Figures 5 - 8.

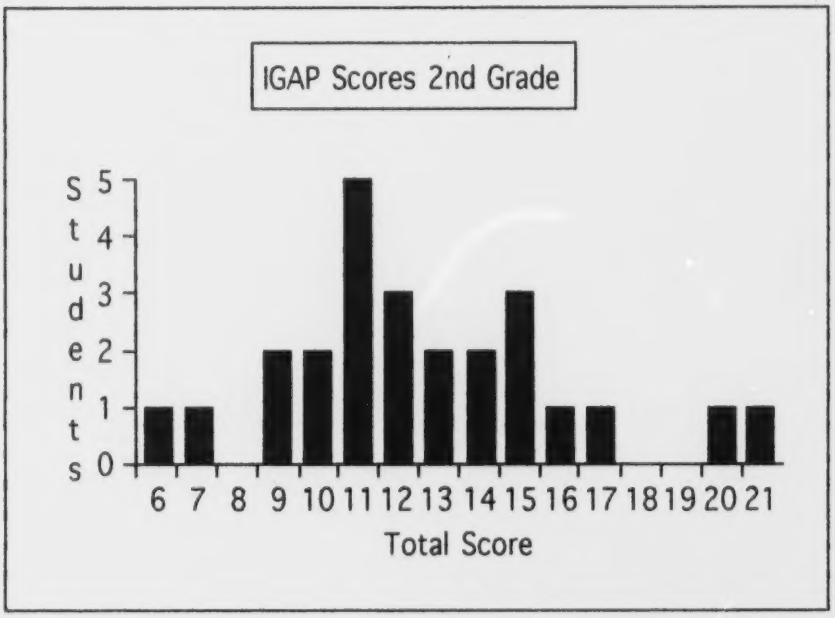

Figure 5

Students' Total Scores on the 15 Minute Writing Prompt According to the IGAP Chart

The 25 targeted second grade students scored between six and 21 points out of a possible total of 32. The overwhelming majority scored between nine and 17 points. Second grade writing has not been scored according to IGAP criteria in previous years, so the teacher did not have a basis for expectations.

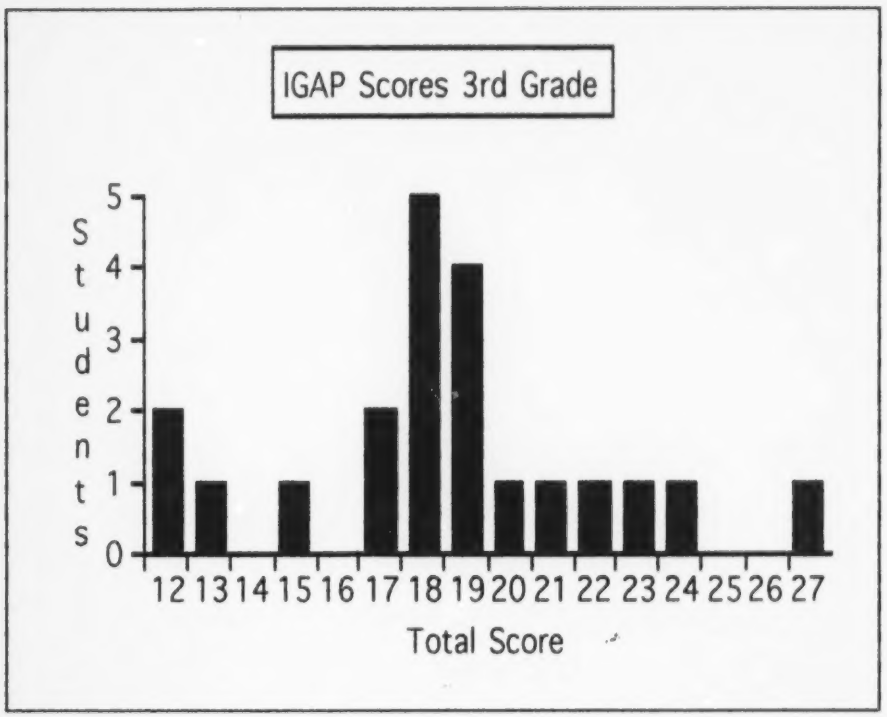

Figure 6

Students' Total Scores on the 15 Minute
Writing Prompt According to the IGAP Chart

The 21 targeted third grade students scored between 12 and 27 points out of a possible total of 32. Fifty-two percent of the students scored between 17 and 19 points. While third grade students have not had their writings scored this early in the year, these scores indicate that previous writing instruction coupled with normal maturation had an impact on their writing.

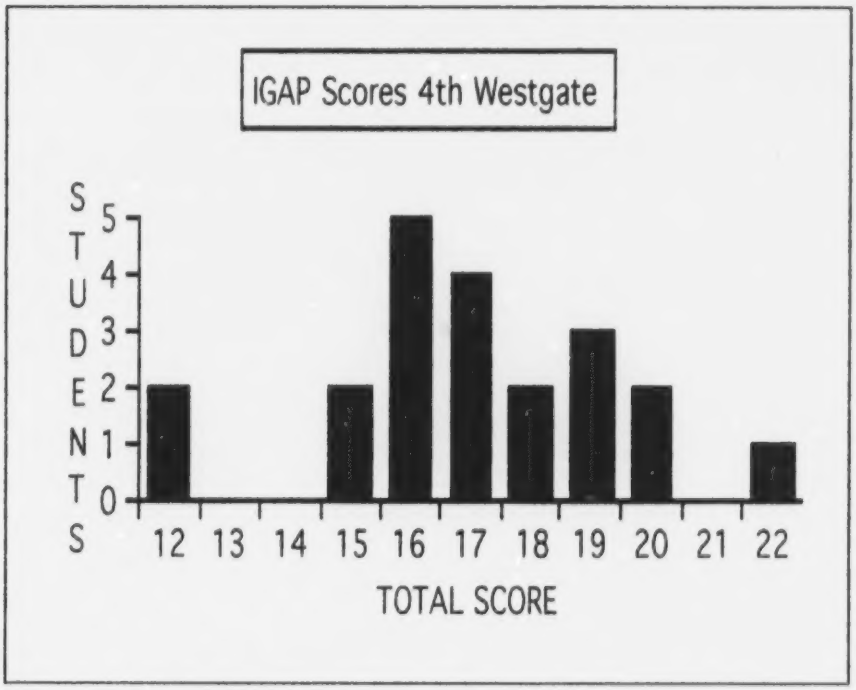

Figure 7

Students' Total Scores on the 15 Minute Writing Prompt According to the IGAP

The 21 targeted fourth grade students of Westgate scored between 12 and 22 points out of a possible total of 32. Forty-three percent of the students scored either 16 or 17. In the past the teacher has had extensive experience scoring writing according to the IGAP criteria and expected beginning fourth grade students to score higher.

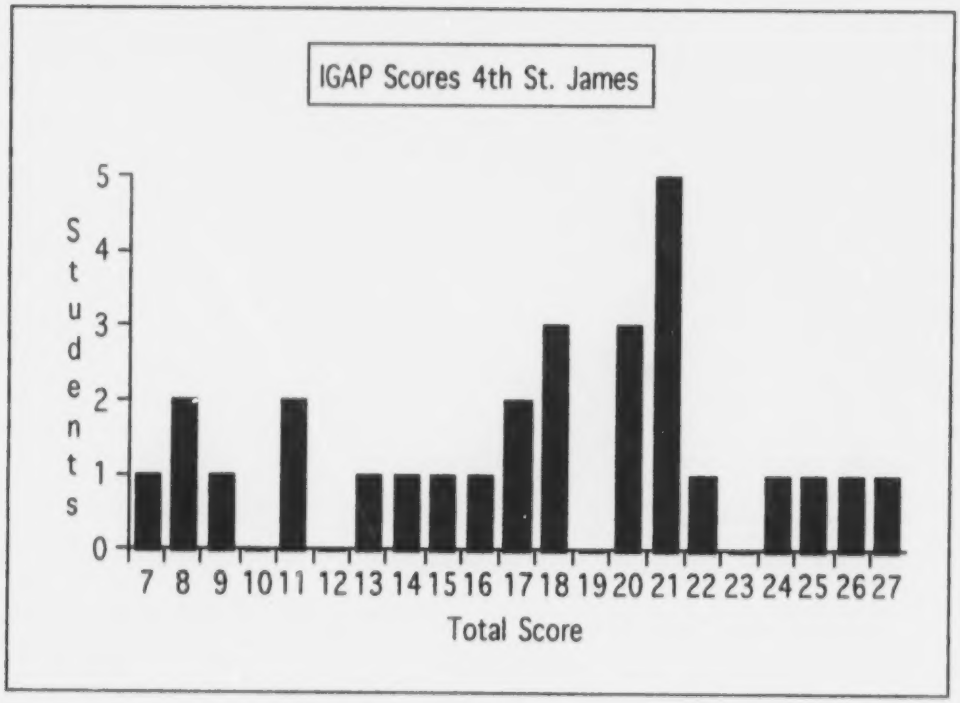

Figure 8

Students' Total Scores on the 15 Minute
Writing Prompt According to the IGAP Chart

The 28 targeted fourth grade students of St. James scored between 7 and 27 points out of a possible total of 32. Forty-six percent of the students scored between 17 and 21 points. Since parochial schools are not required to use this IGAP criteria, the teacher had no preconceived expectations as to how the students should score.

The targeted schools have had a history of scoring above average on standardized measures of writing. Because of the solid educational and economic levels of the communities, even higher educational achievement is expected.

In an effort to determine how the 96 targeted students spend their leisure time and to determine their attitude toward writing, a grade level appropriate survey (Appendix B) was completed by each child. The questions afforded the students the opportunity to answer with multiple responses.

When asked, "What do you like to do best in your free time?", 139 of the 253 responses, or 55 percent, were play, sports, or some type of physical activity. Many of these responses refer to scheduled activities which the survey did not specifically address. Other activities not addressed, such as Scouts, religious classes, language and cultural instruction, and art and music lessons, etc. were not considered leisure time choices by the students. While only 14 percent of the responses pertain to television viewing or the playing of video games, the teachers realized, through class discussions, that television viewing has become so much a part of the students' everyday life that they do not consciously view it as a leisure time choice. It is just something that they do! The teachers were pleased that 41 percent of the students surveyed chose reading as a leisure time activity. Writing, however, was chosen by only ten percent of the students.

The modeling of language is important when children are learning to speak, the modeling of reading is important when children are learning to read, and the modeling of writing is important when children are learning to write. Children responded to questions about incidences of parental and teacher writing. The majority of the responses relating to parental writing, 64 percent, referred to bill paying, family business, or work rather than personal communication. Personal communication, letter or note writing, was referred to by only 28 percent. Seventy-five percent of the responses from students indicated that teachers' writing is work related and only 16 percent involves

personal communication. Students seem to notice little writing for personal communication or for pleasure by parents and teachers, therefore, perhaps, writing for pleasure is not something children choose as a leisure time activity.

Thirty-one percent of the responses indicated that, in school, writing only took place during "writing time", while 52 percent of the responses stated writing was used to complete assignments in other subjects. Few students ever chose to write when they had free time during the school day as indicated by four percent of the responses. These responses implied that school experiences did not encourage children to write for pleasure.

There appears to be a contradiction between the responses to the questions concerning choosing to write during free time and the responses to the questions concerning feelings about writing. When asked, "How do you feel when your teacher gives a writing assignment," 73 percent of the targeted second and third grade students at Fairview and 52 percent of the targeted fourth grade students at St. James responded positively, whereas only 38 percent of the targeted fourth grade students at Westgate responded positively. A possible explanation for this difference is that the second and third grade students at Fairview have not been exposed to as much IGAP preparation, while the fourth grade students at Westgate have been put through rigorous preparation for the IGAP tests. The students at St. James do not take the IGAP.

Analysis of surveys completed by the 26 teachers who responded (Appendix C) indicated that, overall, teaching of writing was perceived as enjoyable. Children were excited about writing and were willing to share. Teachers were able to celebrate the students' growth and creativity as well as becoming better acquainted with them. On the other hand, teachers were frustrated while teaching writing when they felt inadequate because of their

perceived lack of training. One teacher said, " I never know if I'm doing it right!" Teachers also felt constrained by a very crowded curriculum to allow the amount of time needed for the writing process. Preparation for the IGAP testing frustrated many teachers. The question was raised, "Does emphasis on the preparation for the IGAP test conflict with the teaching of the writing process?"

Teachers felt more time should be spent on writing, a minimum of 30 minutes to a maximum of 120 minutes a day. They also felt that writing should be emphasized in all subjects. While teachers responded that they enjoy writing in their personal lives, most of that writing is done outside of the classroom, and, therefore, out of the view of the students.

Table 1 depicts the individual responses to the parent surveys (Appendix D) which were sent home with the targeted students during the first week of school. Parents were directed to respond 'yes' or 'no' to each item. One hundred seventy-two parents responded to the survey. The high level of response demonstrates the support given and interest shown by these parents. The statements were designed to survey parent attitude toward writing, methods of teaching writing, and grading of student writing.

The responses indicate that parents have a mixed attitude toward writing. While they write letters to friends and leave notes for family members, they do not see themselves as skilled writers. A little less than half, 46 percent, feel that they write better than they speak. Only 16 percent feel that they write better than they read. An overwhelming number of parents, 95 percent, like what their children write.

Table 1

Results of Parental Writing Survey

	Yes	No	Undecided
1. I write better than I speak.	46%	52%	4%
2. When I have free time, I prefer writing to reading.	7%	90%	3%
3. Studying grammar formally helps students improve their writing.	95%	5%	0%
4. I leave notes for members of my family.	88%	12%	0%
5. Girls and women enjoy writing more than boys or men.	42%	54%	4%
6. Students who write well generally do better in school than those who don't.	89%	9%	2%
7. If a paper has many misspellings, it should receive a low grade.	62%	33%	5%
8. I revise what I've written.	98%	1%	1%
9. Doing workbook exercises helps students improve their writing.	85%	12%	3%
10. Someone who writes well is more successful in the world than someone who doesn't.	69%	28%	3%
11. I like what my child writes.	95%	5%	0%
12. Writing is a very important way for students to express their feelings.	99%	1%	0%
13. I write better than I read.	16%	84%	0%
14. A sloppy paper should receive a lower grade.	74%	21%	5%
15. I reread what I've written.	99%	1%	0%
16. Writing helps one to learn.	98%	1%	1%
17. I write letters to my family and friends.	54%	46%	0%
18. Correctness is more important than content in students' writing.	14%	84%	2%

The seven items pertaining to the methods of teaching writing showed that parents hold traditional views. They thought that studying grammar, doing workbook exercises, and revising written work helped one to be a better writer. Parents also felt that writing is a very important way for students to express their feelings and that someone who writes well is more successful.

A sloppy paper or one with many misspellings was perceived as deserving of a lower grade. However, parents felt that content was more important than correctness in student writing at these grade levels.

It can be concluded from the results of the writing prompt and surveys, that given more time, encouragement, and writing experience, the targeted second, third, and fourth grade students would show growth in writing skills and improvement in their attitude toward writing.

Probable Causes

Teachers have been criticizing students for their lack of writing skills for centuries and have been constantly searching for ways to help them. Jenkinson (1988) mentions that a clay tablet of the early Sumerians,who he states are the people who gave the world writing, " recorded the agonized complaints of a Sumerian teacher about the sudden drop-off in students' writing ability." (Daniels, 1983, p.33). The most recent report from the U.S. Department of Education's NAEP states, "Many students at each grade level continue to have serious difficulty in producing effective informative, persuasive or narrative writing," even though schools have increased the emphasis on writing instruction.

There has been an increased emphasis on writing instruction in schools, but perhaps that emphasis has been ill-advised. The state of Illinois has set

standards of writing that are assessed by mandated tests. The emphasis is on the content and form of writing rather than on isolated mechanical skills. However, teachers, feeling the pressure of having their students score well on these tests, have focused on a formalized product rather than on the process of writing. "It's a truism that taking the principles of good pedagogy and turning them into the sterilized documents of mandated curriculum is a nasty business. Almost all good teaching strategies suffer when they become institutionalized" (Kirby, Latta, and Vinz, 1988, p. 718).

According to Cohen and Riel (1989, p. 143), "writing is a communicative act, a way of sharing observations, information, thoughts, or ideas with ourselves and others." In Write On, Illinois the state contends writing is:

> a fundamental vehicle for students to discover, explain, and extend their thoughts and feelings about personal and academic experiences. Writing not only provides educators with a window to students' understanding of school subjects, but it also helps students to examine and refine the content and structure of their ideas and communications. In recognition of the role writing plays in people's academic, vocational, social, and personal lives, the development of students' ability to write for a variety of purposes and audiences is a central goal of schooling. (p. 4)

Many researchers such as Graves, Calkins, Atwell, Murray,and Crafton have found that writers follow a process of "craft" when they work, much as researchers follow a scientific method. This writing process consists of the following stages: prewriting or rehearsal, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing. Oral communication has been valued in school, but children need to take what they think and say and express it in a written form. "E.M. Forster reported hearing someone say, 'How do I know what I think until I see what I say?'" (Cullinan, 1993, p. 3).

It would seem that, based on available research, the major reasons why children today are unable to effectively and willingly communicate by writing are the excessive amount of scheduled leisure time activities and television viewing, insufficient modeling of writing by significant adults, influences of past experiences in the classroom, and the overburdened, inflexible school day and curriculum.

A common observation made by elementary teachers is that children spend an inordinate amount of time watching television. Wagner (1992) quotes a teacher, Peggy Haskell, as saying, "Pupils are not as independent as they once were...I see society making a lot of decisions for them. I think they watch much too much unsupervised television. It's difficult to get them to become actively involved" (p. 3). Children age three through six spend an average of four hours a day watching television. By age eighteen, they will have spent the equivalent of seven years watching television, more time than spent in school (Carlsson-Paige & Levin, 1992). The NAEP report further substantiates this view by pointing out that those students who spend 14 hours a week in front of television spend only two hours a week on writing. Therefore their chances of being poor writers are intensified. On the other hand, students who spend less time watching television and more time doing homework and reading tend to be better writers (1992) than those who watch more television and do less homework and reading.

Wagner (1992) also states, "Television is not the only thing competing for children's time. Even in first grade, many of Haskell's students take tennis one day, karate the next. [This full schedule may be] 'good for children, but it also takes away their edge to be creative thinkers'" (p. 7).

According to Maimon (1988), many capable adults, were taught during their early school years that the writing experience is likely to be an occasion for humiliation. "When students are taught writing strictly in avoiding errors, many of them learn to avoid errors by the most efficient means available, i.e., by avoiding writing" (p. 734). Avoidance of writing can become a life-long habit and children don't see their parents experiencing the joy of writing.

In the past, as dictated by the curriculum, teachers have spent their time reading, not writing. They need to understand and present more fully to their students the processes through which professionals take their writing. In other words effective modeling needs to be a part of the literate classroom. While this modeling has not been generally practiced in the past, "More and more teachers indicate that they write while their students write. And a surprising number share their journal entries with their students" (Jenkinson, 1988, pp. 714,716). Such teachers, indeed, model writing expectations.

According to Graves (1983), from the first time a child holds a crayon in a tiny hand, the marks that are made say "I am." "No you aren't" say most writing programs in schools. In failing to understand the writing process, teachers often negate the child's natural urge to share life experiences. They impose control upon children through emphasis on spelling and mechanics. "Teachers have been saying, 'Wrong! wrong! wrong!' when they should have been saying, 'Right, good! keep going!' even if they said it about only one word or one sentence in a paper" (Jenkinson, 1988, p.714). Children " continually interrupt themselves to worry about spelling, to reread, and to fret. This 'stuttering in writing' leads to tangled syntax and destroys fluency. It is a dysfunctional strategy, one that impedes effective writing (Calkins, 1986, p. 15-16). The child's innate desire to communicate has been stifled by this learned obstacle to

writing. Teachers then say, "They don't want to write. How can we motivate them?" (Graves, 1983, p. 3).

> If students are going to become deeply invested in their writing, and if they are going to draft and revise, sharing their texts with each other as they write, they need the luxury of time. If they are going to have the chance to do their best, and to make their best better, they need long blocks of time (Calkins, 1986, p. 23).

"Writers need time--regular, frequent chunks of time that they can count on, anticipate, and plan for" (Atwell, 1987, p. 55). According to Sudol and Sudol (1991), tight scheduling has its impact. In a typical day, there are numerous interruptions which can cause a loss of continuity and impede the flow of writing making this art difficult to develop.

"Our choppy curricula moves students too quickly from one lesson to the next, giving them a fast dance from subject to subject" (Crafton, 1991, p. 85). "When students get the idea that writing 'counts' only in language arts or that logical thinking is the special preserve of the math class or that experiments happen only in science lab, they get an inaccurate and piecemeal view of learning" (Kirby et al., 1988, p. 721). " Writing can--and should--permeate the school day. Writing helps children clarify what they are thinking and learning. It provides them with opportunities to become actively involved in their learning, and makes their learning more meaningful" (Bunce-Crim, 1992, p. 22). Students are not afforded the necessity of time they need to seek and develop the interconnected threads of the ideas presented in a variety of classes. In order to make these connections, time must to be strictly designated .

Therefore, it becomes evident that the following significant causes are reasons for children's lack of skill and motivation to express themselves and

communicate in writing:

1. excessive amount of scheduled leisure time activities and television viewing,
2. insufficient modeling of writing by significant adults,
3. influences of past experiences in classrooms,
4. overburdened and inflexible school day and curriculum.

Chapter 3

THE SOLUTION STRATEGY

Review of the Literature

The research findings on students' lack of skills and motivation to express themselves and communicate in writing provide more than enough evidence to suggest it is time for schools to successfully address this issue. Calkins believes schools, circumventing the authentic, human reasons for writing, smother the students' natural urge to write even more with "boxes, kits, and manuals full of synthetic writing-stimulants." Educators are not looking at real reasons that students have learned to dislike writing. Instead they rush about "pushing, luring, encouraging, motivating, stimulating, bribing, requiring..." The resulting short-lived enthusiasm is followed by inevitable passivity leading to the students' resistance to writing and the teachers' resistance to teaching writing (p. 4).

Research literature substantiates several probable causes. They are the excessive amount of scheduled leisure time activities and television viewing, insufficient modeling of writing by significant adults, influences of past experiences in the classroom, and the overburdened, inflexible school day and curriculum.

Schools have little influence on the way students spend their leisure time. However, parents can be encouraged to model writing and to provide opportunities and an atmosphere which will foster their children's enjoyment of

writing. In this age of easy oral communication, the necessity to communicate through writing has lessened. It is easier to pick up a telephone to call family, friends, businesses, make appointments, and pay bills. Now the computer has become a catalyst for the resurgence of the importance of using writing skills. Computers are becoming more commonplace everywhere, in the home, school, and workplace. When computers are combined with modems and FAX machines, children are exposed to the broader possibilities of written communication. Children are messages to the future and they will travel there via the information superhighway. Even though computers were not a part of the education of earlier generations, parents and teachers can encourage their use in children's written communication. According to Mehan, Moll, and Riel (1985), computer-supported writing environments that included writing to peer audiences have resulted in increased writing skills. Teachers can also support the parents' endeavor by providing suggestions (Appendix F) such as those recommended by The National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE).

"Living that surrounds what we do at the desk nourishes our writing... Writing is lifework, not deskwork" (Calkins, 1991, pp. xi, 7). To make children aware of writing's impact on their lives, teachers ought first to recognize its impact on their own. They have to acknowledge this fact and act on it. In the past when children have been writing, teachers have been grading papers, preparing for the next lesson, or overseeing the editing of the student's work. "We can no longer ask our students to do things that we don't also do." (Crafton, 1991, pp. 14-15). In class, students are asked to share their writing, teachers must be willing to share also. Educators need to be doing what students are doing while they are doing it. Teachers must be writers!

One of the reasons that teachers do not actively model good writing is

due to their own past encounters. The feelings of many children and teachers toward writing echo the past experiences of a teacher Graves (1983), interviewed who related one horrendous school writing experience after another and her pain involved in writing. As a result, she was reluctant to teach writing and have the children go through similar experiences. She only knew how to mimic "giving the children a title, paper, pencils, and time to write, collecting the papers and correcting the mistakes"(p. 11). She could not, in good conscience, inspire delight in the process of writing.

Moreover, teachers have often made the mistake of not setting standards for writing. Because they are afraid of stifling the child's creativity, they often overpraised anything "cute, wild, or bizarre." This type of writing gave students the impression that the act of composing was an effortless, "top-of-the-head" experience. Instead students must be taught to use the writing process to help them organize their own experiences and communicate them effectively to others. "School writing must be based on students' experiences, thoughts, and interactions. 'Fantasy Island' writing must not be allowed to substitute for writing based on experience" (Kirby et al., 1988, p. 721).

Teachers always say there is not enough time in the school day. This lack of time is the enemy of the written word. Teaching children to write--to craft words into effective communication--must be an essential part of the school day. It is taken for granted that reading and math skills are practiced daily. Children can only become proficient in the use of writing skills if they are modeled and experienced every day also. Educators must overcome the perception that writing is an extra and place value on it as an essential tool (Avery, 1992).

The fragmented day causes teachers to spend a considerable amount of their time addressing the problem of who has to go where and when. Fallout

from the numerous interruptions and countless pullout programs, coupled with a hectic schedule, impede the necessary unhurried pace dictated by the nature of the writing process. This needs to change. "Teachers find time for writing by taking it" (Graves, 1983, p. 90). They must make it happen. This can be accomplished by reducing the use of or abandoning worksheets or workbooks, deflating the curriculum by removing repetitious elements, integrating compatible subjects within the curriculum, arranging the schedule to combine bits of time into larger blocks for writing, and creating time-saving teaching tactics.

Children learn to write by writing. Several proposed ways to achieve this are emphasizing journal writing, implementing writers' workshop, and assessing through portfolio collections. Journals "provide writers with an informal and safe situation in which they can focus on their own thoughts and feelings and on meaning and fluency, rather than on assigned topics or on conventions" (Harste, Short, and Burke, 1988, p.280).

Journals should be dated, unedited writing about personal experiences or topics chosen by the students and shared optionally with peers, teachers and parents. Journaling should be an opportunity for students to learn that writing has merit for themselves and is not a means for responding to other people's demands. In an Illinois Renewal Institute (IRI) workshop, called "Writing the Natural Way" led by Gabriela Rico, participants brainstormed the reasons people write. The list they generated concluded that writing is done for self-discovery, self-knowledge, self-validation, and is a vehicle to express thoughts and feelings about things in a person's corner of the world and in their own mind. Such personal expression can be achieved through the keeping of journals. Journal time should be set aside regularly and not used as an

occasional treat. Risk taking, growth and exploration will never take place for many students if journal writing is not scheduled and predictable.

Calkins (1986) says that teaching writing starts with the understanding that each person brings to the writers' workshop concerns, impressions, memories, and emotions. The job of teachers is to listen and help them listen. In inter-active classroom workshops, the human urge to write can be tapped by helping students realize their lives are worth writing about and sharing.

Developing the structure and routine of a daily writers' workshop will allow students to have a stress-free, continuous, predictable, organized environment conducive to the writing process. Within the day's workshop, time is scheduled for whole group mini-lessons, an activity period, and an opportunity to share (see Figure 9).

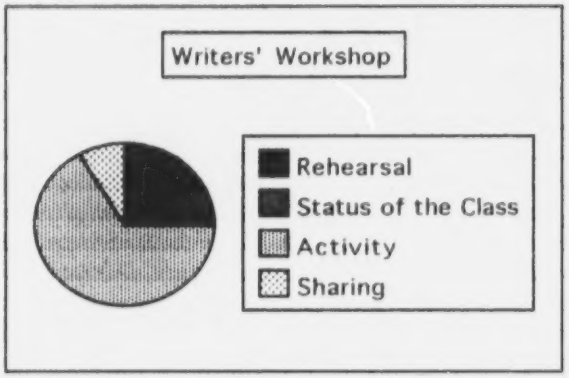

Figure 9

During the mini-lesson component, the teacher presents specific concepts and skills motivated by the students' needs. At this point the teacher may conduct a whole class status survey to quickly check in with each writer.

The activity portion is comprised of rehearsal (prewriting), drafting, revision, and editing. These steps are not necessarily sequential because they

are fluid by nature and do not occur in a linear, step-by-step fashion. The student moves between the steps as the need arises. After reflection, students may discard writing or may return to an unfinished work (see Figure 10). Students may conference with peers or teachers during this time.

Fluidity of the Writing Process

Figure 10

In the final segment, students share the focus of a mini-lesson that they were able to use in their writing, excerpts from writing, or whole drafts which may be published. Publishing is not necessarily the expected end of all writing. One sharing technique to promote self-esteem and to focus listening is to have the student read from an Author's Chair. Discussion and the exchange of papers is valuable as it leads to the possibility of further revision. Many students resist sharing, but the process helps greatly to build critical judgment.

The use of portfolios is an effective way of assessing writing. "A portfolio is more than a container full of stuff. It's a systematic and organized collection of evidence used by the teacher and students to monitor growth of the student's knowledge, skills, and attitudes" (Vavrus, 1990, p. 48). The goal of portfolio assessment is to develop children's competence to reflectively appraise themselves and their work as well as to reinforce positive writing behaviors. Parents often have an unrealistic view of the work involved in the writing of a completed piece because they are accustomed to seeing the perfectly corrected edition on display or that the child brings home. "Portfolio assessment gives parents an appreciation for their children that reportcard grades can't give. It also helps them understand the writing process and gives them a picture of how their children see themselves as writers" (Bunce-Crim, 1992, p. 29).

Students must have an active role in selecting material, which does not have to be in published form or even finished, for their portfolio. In order to explain their choice, they must have a reason, such as: "includes lots of details", "I learned something", "explores an interesting idea", or "one my friends enjoyed". Once the piece is selected and placed in the portfolio, it should not be forgotten. Students ought to regularly review their portfolios and write reflections about their work. This reflection can help the student internalize the writing process.

Project Outcomes

Analysis of the probable cause data discussed previously suggests the need for the implementation of an organized writing curriculum to provide opportunities for students to effectively and willingly communicate by writing.

As a result of increased instructional emphasis on writing processes and experiences, during the period of September, 1994 to January,1995, the second, third, and fourth grade students from the targeted classes will increase their written communication skills and willingness to use those skills, as measured by teacher observation, surveys, scored writing samples, and reviews of student portfolios.

In order to accomplish the terminal objective, the following strategic procedures are proposed:

1. a writers' workshop will be implemented,
2. journal writing criteria will be developed,
3. a method for student writing collection will be organized,
4. survey questions concerning writing attitudes and experiences will be devised.

Action Plan for the Intervention

The action plan is designed to address three major solution components: journal writing, writers' workshop, and portfolio collection. It has a series of sequential daily plans for initial implementation during the first several weeks of school. Once the basic components are functioning, students will continue to grow as writers supported by skill lessons developed to meet their needs. These plans can be used by teachers to help students increase their written communication skills and willingness to use those skills.

The implementation plan is presented in a chronological framework of lessons. The lessons can be adjusted and adapted according to class and time constraints.

Parents will be contacted through letter and survey (Appendix D) before implementation of this action plan in order to facilitate the partnership of home and school influences, and therefore to maximize the desired outcomes of the project.

Before school starts teachers will

* visit each other's classrooms.
* set up their own classrooms using input from visit.
* create centers including supplies.
* create and duplicate surveys, class lists, parent information.
* give teacher survey to second, third, fourth, and LD resource teachers.
* begin writing in personal journals.

Day 1 - Teachers will

* give survey to students (Appendix B)
* send home parent letter and survey (Appendix D).
* journal about the first day of school.

Day 2 - Teachers will

* give students a writing prompt (Appendix A).
* count the number of words written in 15 minutes.
* score the quality of work using the IGAP scale (Appendix E).
* journal.

Day 3 - Teachers will introduce journal writing

* Explanation
  + Students choose own topic.
  + Entries contain feelings, recollections, observations, reflections, reactions.
  + Sharing entries is optional.
  + Entries are unedited.
* Time allotment
  + 10 minutes at a regularly scheduled time
  + give "attention" to journals (writing, reading, thinking, drawing)
* Supplies
  + spiral notebook
  + pencil
* Format
  + entries dated
  + words, pictures, lists, notes, poems, jokes, etc.
* Modeling
  + Teacher will share one of her journal entries using the overhead.
* Teachers and students will write in their journals.

Day 4 - Teachers will introduce Writers' Workshop

* Explanation
  + mini-lesson of concept or skill
  + whole class status report
  + activity period (rehearsal, drafting, revising, and editing)

+ sharing

* Time allotment
    + 40-60 minutes
    + scheduled three to five consecutive days a week
* Supplies (Appendix G)
* Format
    + writing folders for works in progress
    + permanent writing folders for completed or abandoned work
    + classroom floor plan (mini-lesson, peer conferencing and editing, quiet writing area, sharing)
    + rules for writing (Appendix H)
* Teachers and students will write.

Day 5

* Mini-lesson (Appendix I)
    + development of topics list

Day 6

* Mini-lesson (Appendix J)
    + Teacher chooses one topic.
    + Teacher models rehearsal by demonstrating: clustering, word bank, VENN diagram, mind mapping.
* Class status report
* Activity period
* Sharing

Day 7

* Mini-lesson (Appendix K)
    + options for sharing
* Class status report (explain in detail and take for the first time)
* Activity period
* Sharing

Day 8

* Mini-lesson (Appendix L)
    + revision practice - a bland first draft is revised by the teacher with class input
* Class status report
* Activity period
* Sharing

Day 9

* Mini-lesson (Appendix M)
    + purposes and audiences
* Class status report
* Activity period
* Sharing

Day 10

* Mini-lesson (Appendix N)
    + Teacher explains checklists and editing marks.
    + Teacher models self- and peer-editing.

+ Students affix editing marks charts to writing folders.

* Class status report
* Activity period
* Sharing

Day 11

* Mini-lesson (Appendix O)

+Student chooses writing to self-edit.

* Class status report
* Activity period
* Sharing

Day 12

* Mini-lesson (Appendix P)

+ A partner will peer-edit the same piece.

+ With editing sheet attached, corrected work is placed in editor's box.

* Class status report
* Activity period
* Sharing

Day 13

* Mini-lesson (Appendix Q)

+ details

* Class status report
* Activity period
* Sharing

Day 14

* Mini-lesson (Appendix R)
    + peer-conferencing
* Class status report
* Activity period
* Sharing

Day 15 and until the end of the year

* Further mini-lesson topics (Appendix S) will evolve in response to the needs evidenced in the children's writing.
* When children have collected enough writing samples, perhaps by the end of October, this mini-lesson will be given.
    + Show students what will be used for their labeled portfolio i.e. file folder, over-sized envelope, pizza box, accordion file, etc. and its location.
    + Samples are student-selected.
    + All students receive tags to be attached to their writing that state a reason for making the selection.(Appendix T)
    + Samples may or may not be in published form.
    + Portfolios should be regularly reviewed by the student and teacher.
* When students are ready to have their writing published the following mini-lesson will be used:
    + fill out form (Appendix U) for selection of cover color, dedication, print placement, and "About the Author" page.
    + attach the form to the writing and place in the publishing box.

* Arrange for writing to be published by parent volunteers.

Middle of January - Teachers will

* give survey to students (Appendix V).
* give students a writing prompt (Appendix W).
* count the number of words written in 15 minutes.
* score the quality of work using the IGAP scale (Appendix E).

Methods of Assessment

A variety of data collection methods will be used in order to assess the effects of these interventions. The action plan will be evaluated in February, 1995.

The methods of assessment will be ongoing and authentic in nature. Growth in writing ability will be determined by comparing the quality and quantity of pre- and post-implementation writing samples and reviews of student portfolios. The change in attitude will by noted by teacher observation and the contrast of attitude surveys given at the beginning and end of this project.

Chapter 4

ANALYSIS OF RESULTS AND PROCESSES RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE FUTURE

Historical Description of Intervention

The terminal objective of the interventions addressed the students' lack of skills and motivation to express themselves and communicate in writing. Student and teacher surveys and teacher observations indicated a need for interventions in this area. The terminal objective of this action research project stated,

> As a result of increased instructional emphasis on writing processes and experiences, during the period of September, 1994, to January,1995, the second, third, and fourth grade students from the targeted classes will increase their written communication skills and willingness to use those skills, as measured by teacher observation, surveys, scored writing samples, and reviews of student portfolios.

In order to accomplish the terminal objective, the following strategic procedures were proposed:

1. a writers' workshop will be implemented,
2. journal writing criteria will be developed,
3. a method for student writing collection will be organized,
4. survey questions concerning writing attitudes and experiences will be devised.

This project was designed for and carried out in the targeted second,

third, and fourth grade self-contained public school classrooms, and the targeted departmentalized fourth grade parochial classroom.

The developed structure and routine of a writers' workshop allowed students to work in an environment conducive to the writing process. Within the day's workshop, time was to be scheduled for whole group mini-lessons, an active writing period, and an opportunity to share.

Journal writing was established as an opportunity for students to discover that writing can be for personal fulfillment and need not only be a means for responding to others. Journal entries were dated, unedited, and shared optionally with peers, teachers, and parents.

Student writing was to be collected in a systematic and organized manner in order for students, teachers, and parents to note growth in writing skills. This collection was to be used to determine the objectives of mini-lessons. Also included were writing prompts given before and after the intervention. These were scored for both quality and quantity of student writing as a means to measure change.

Initial and final surveys were developed and given to students to determine attitudes towards writing. Pre-intervention surveys were also developed and distributed to the parents of targeted students and other teachers at targeted grade levels.

A great deal of time was spent and effort exerted before the beginning of the school year. Surveys were developed, materials were prepared, and supplies were gathered. Visits to each classroom helped assist the teachers in determining the physical arrangement of furniture and supplies in the classrooms to facilitate writers' workshop. These preparations were essential in order to have the many components in place to implement the program effectively and immediately.

The implementation plan for writers' workshop was presented in a chronological framework of lessons which were adjusted and adapted as necessary for individual classes and according to time constraints. The teachers of the targeted second and fourth grade self-contained classes scheduled writers' workshop five days a week. Writers' workshop was scheduled on three consecutive days each week in the targeted self-contained third and the departmentalized fourth grade classrooms. All the targeted classes allocated 40 - 60 minutes for each writers' workshop period.

It became apparent immediately that the ideal schedule could not be practically and consistently applied. In second grade, the teacher was able to implement writers' workshop as planned except for unexpected special whole school events. The third grade teacher found there were also many interruptions. In addition, beginning in December, writers' workshop time was used to teach the mandated format for persuasive, narrative, and expository essays in preparation for the IGAP given in March. For this period of time students had to forego the freedom of choice endemic to a true writers' workshop. The self-contained fourth grade class often had to set aside writers' workshop time to have students write prescribed assignments to address other facets of the curriculum. Because of departmentalization in the other targeted fourth grade, the teacher chose to have a complete week of workshop lessons, whenever practical, alternating this with weeks of other language arts curriculum requirements.

Each of the teachers began writers' workshop with the first dozen prepared mini-lessons as planned. Further mini-lesson topics evolved in response to the needs evidenced in the children's writing. All teachers decided

that daily use of the status of the class report was impractical and unnecessary. It was useful, however, when writers' workshop was reconvened after a hiatus. This status of the class report helped the teacher and the students reorganize. All students had an opportunity to share writing but not necessarily during each writer's workshop as originally planned.

The three self-contained classroom teachers found it easy to follow the typical writers' workshop format as outlined on pages 33 and 34. However, the departmentalized teacher, due to the restriction of forty minute classes, found it necessary to allot one full period to each component of the writing process. The students used graphic organizers or notes to rehearse or on Monday, drafted on Tuesday, revised on Wednesday, edited on Thursday, and shared on Friday.

Journaling began in earnest but was abandoned by three of the teachers because of time constraints. The second grade teacher, however, found consistent time each day after recess for journaling. These students anticipated this time and have become self-directed. This has encouraged the other teachers to try to put journaling into the schedule again.

It was planned that each student would have two writing folders. One folder would contain works in progress, and the other would be permanent, containing completed or abandoned work. The teachers of the self-contained classes found these folders to be helpful as students used them to review and reflect upon their work. Therefore the folders have become portfolios for student writing. The departmentalized students keep works in progress in regular language folders which are stored in homerooms. Completed work can be chosen by the students to be placed in the "all subject" portfolios kept at this grade level. It has been observed by the teachers that either portfolio method has encouraged student self- assessment.

According to the action plan, surveys were to be given to teachers, students, and parents. The results supported the teachers' initial beliefs about student attitudes toward writing. A second survey (Appendix V) was given to students in January to assess any change in this attitude.

Presentation and Analysis of Results

Both subjective and objective means were used to document the evidence of change in writing skills and attitude toward writing. During the last week of January, a second writing prompt (Appendix W) was administered to the targeted students. Attitudes of students were explored through the use of a survey (Appendix V).

After an allotted time of fifteen minutes to respond to the writing prompt, the words were counted and these numbers recorded. The results of the January prompt were compared with those of September for each class and are shown in Figures 9-12.

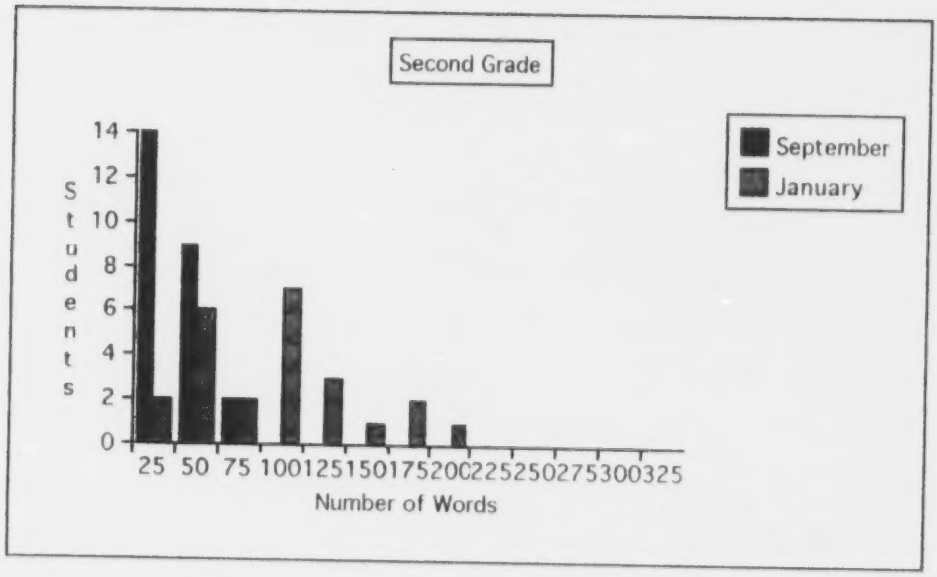

Figure 9

Number of Words Written During a 15 Minute Writing Prompt

While the targeted second graders wrote between four and 64 words in September, the students wrote between 15 and 200 words in January. The average number of words increased from 26 to 86. The number of words written were recorded in increments of 25 to facilitate the production of the graph. In September, students struggled to spend 15 minutes writing. Whereas, in January, for most, 15 minutes was not enough time.

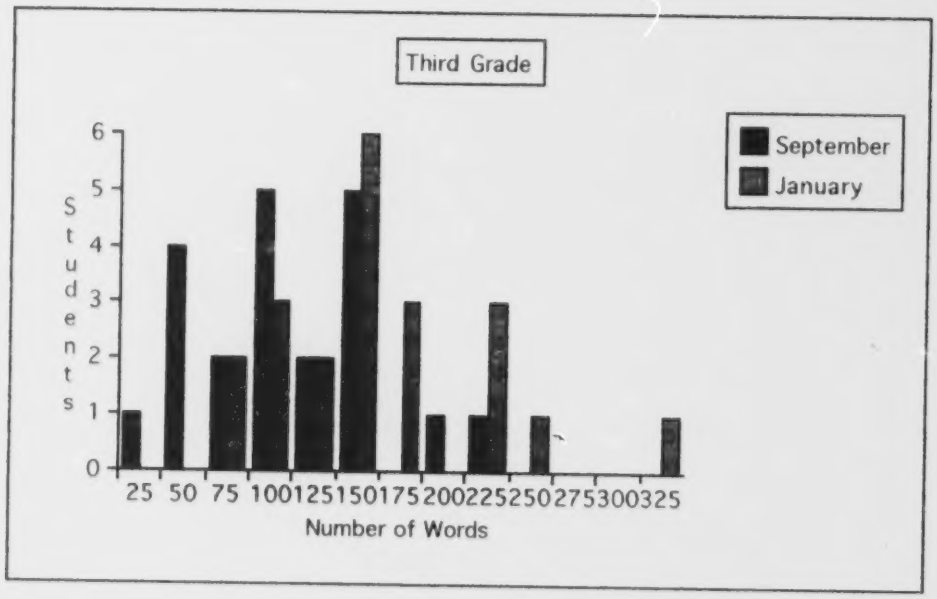

Figure 10

Number of Words Written During a 15 Minute Writing Prompt

While the 21 targeted third grade students wrote between 20 and 210 words in September, the students wrote between 55 and 319 words in January. The average number of words increased from 98 to 150. The number of words written were recorded in increments of 25 to facilitate the production of the graph. The teacher was pleased to see that, even though the students wrote more words than expected in September, growth was still notable.

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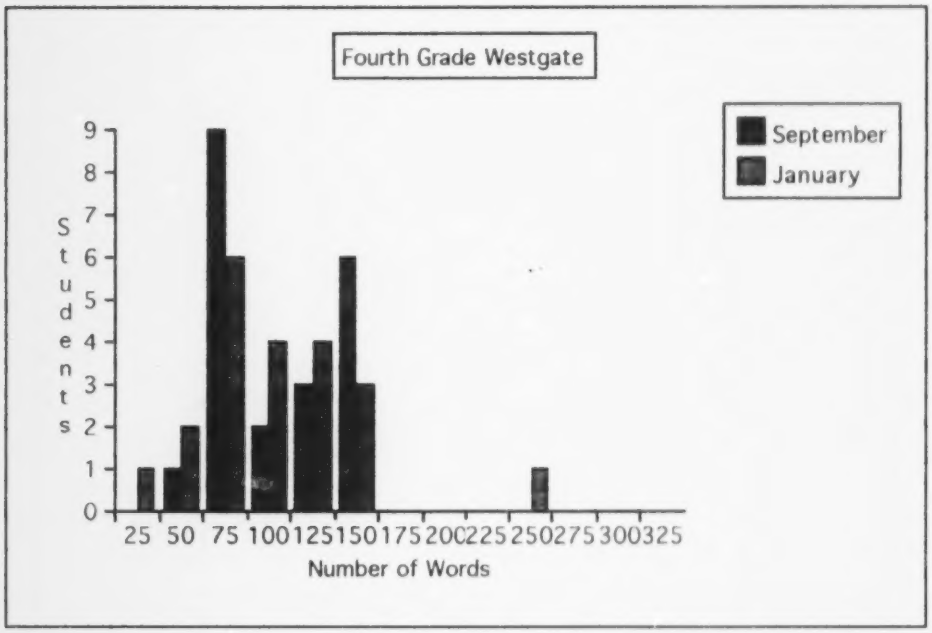

Figure 11

Number of Words Written During a 15 Minute Writing Prompt

While the 21 targeted fourth students at Westgate wrote between 27 and 149 words in September, the students wrote between 17 and 227 words in January. The average number of words stayed the same at 92. The number of words written were recorded in increments of 25 to facilitate the production of the graph. It was necessary for a substitute teacher to administer the January prompt, and this may have affected the outcome.

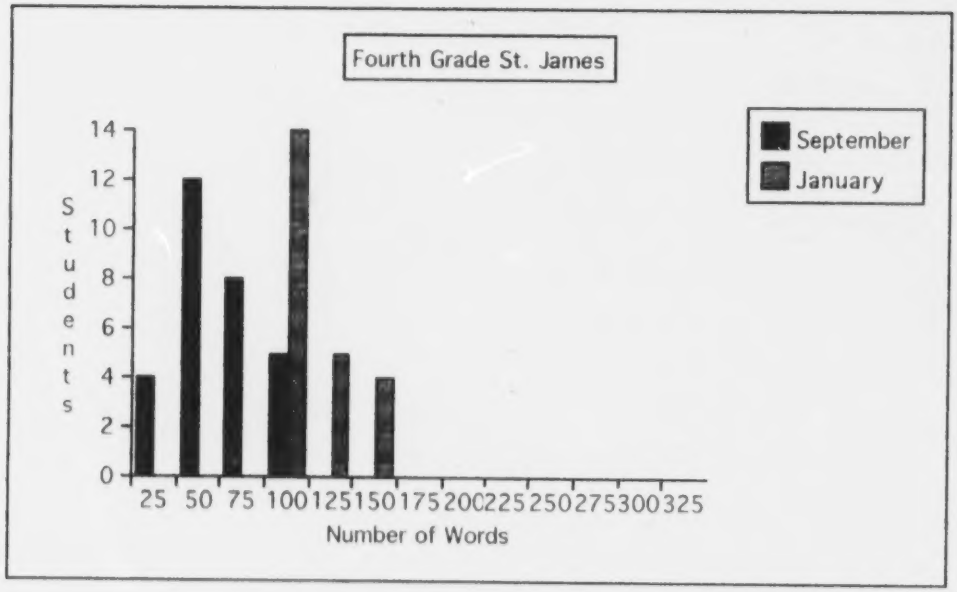

Figure 12

Number of Words Written During a 15 Minute Writing Prompt

While the 28 targeted fourth students at St. James wrote between nine and 139 words in September, the students wrote between 76 and 153 words in January. The average number of words increased from 52 to 101. The number of words written were recorded in increments of 25 to facilitate the production of the graph. The most marked change was the word count of the student who wrote from the low of nine words in September to 92 words in January.

This writing prompt was scored also according to the IGAP Writing Development Chart. Students' writings were evaluated only by the classroom teacher. Scores may have been affected by the subjective and perhaps more strict application of the criteria by each teacher this time. The results of the January prompt were compared with those of September for each class and are shown in Figures 13-16.

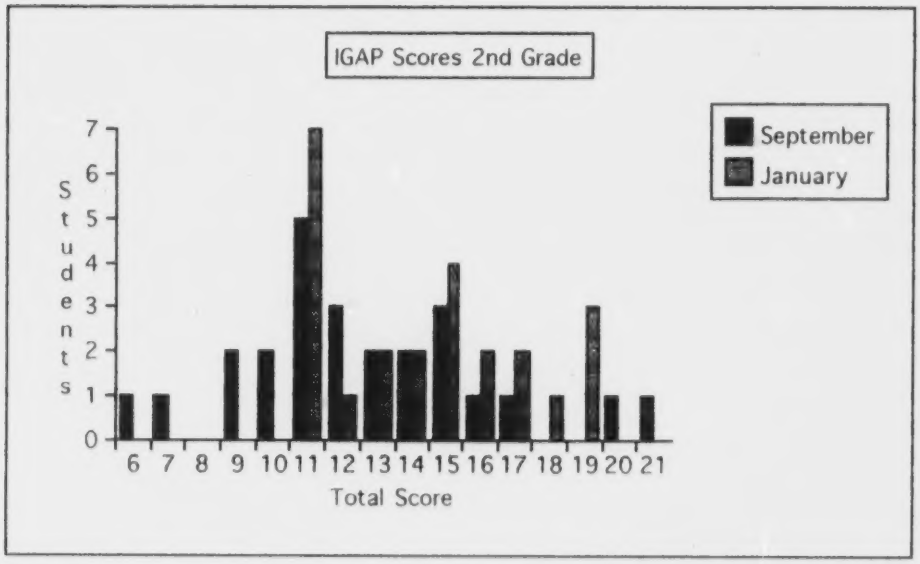

Figure 13

Students' Total Scores on the 15 Minute
Writing Prompt According to the IGAP Chart

While the targeted second graders scored between six and 21 points out of a possible total of 32 in September, the students scored between 11 and 19 in January. Second grade curriculum does not encompass the writing components scored on the IGAP, other than paragraph format. The average scores increased from 12.6 to 14.3. The teacher felt that this was due to the increased opportunities for writing and the unstructured nature of those experiences.

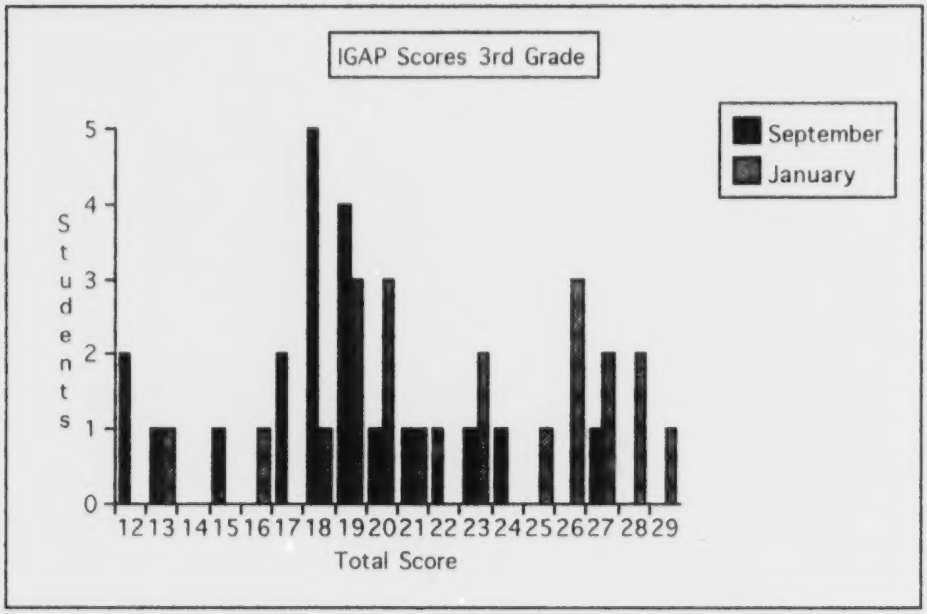

Figure 14

Students' Total Scores on the 15 Minute
Writing Prompt According to the IGAP Chart

While the targeted third graders scored between 12 and 27 points out of a possible total of 32 in September, the students scored between 13 and 29 in January. The average scores increased from 18.5 to 22.5. These figures show an expected growth. This prompt was given during a period of preparation for the IGAP, which may have affected the outcome.

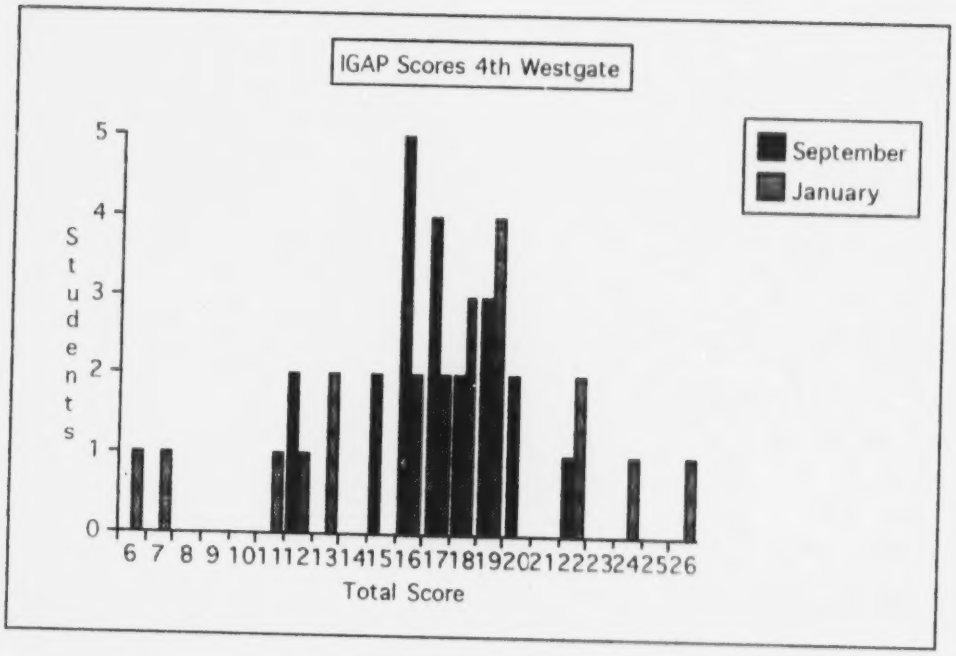

Figure 15

Students' Total Scores on the 15 Minute
Writing Prompt According to the IGAP Chart

While the 21 targeted fourth graders of Westgate scored between 12 and 22 points out of a possible total of 32 in September, the students scored between 6 and 26 in January. The average scores stayed the same at 17. Again, because a substitute teacher administered this prompt, outcomes may be skewed.

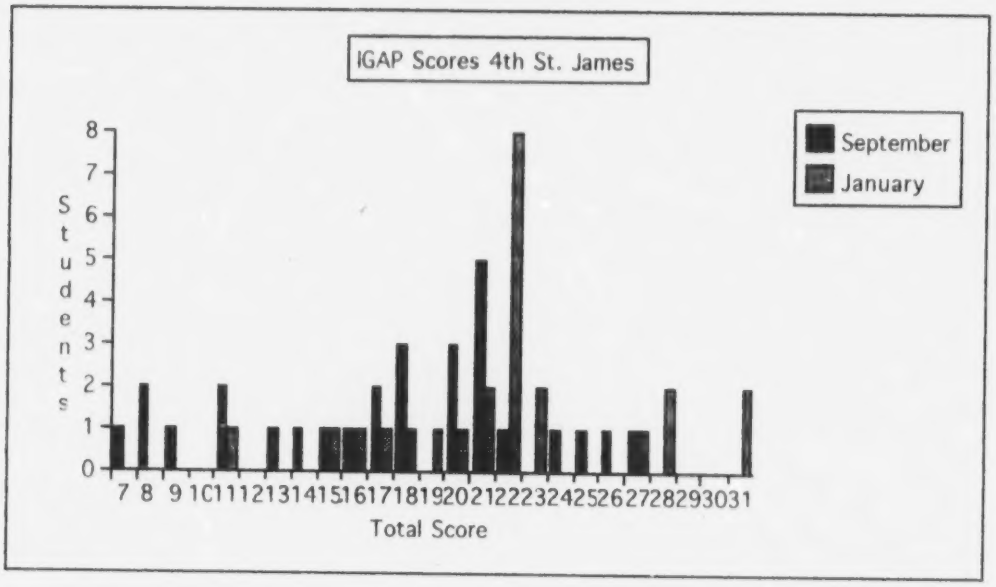

Figure 16

Students' Total Scores on the 15 Minute
Writing Prompt According to the IGAP Chart

While the 28 targeted fourth graders of St. James scored between 7 and 27 points out of a possible total of 32 in September, the students scored between 11 and 31 in January. The average score increased from 17.6 to 22. While growth is evident, it is not clear how much is due to maturation alone.

In an effort to determine how the targeted students felt about writing, another survey (Appendix N) was completed by each child in January. The focus of the survey was to note change in attitude. This survey was more explicit and better geared toward students who had been writing for a semester. The questions afforded the students the opportunity to answer with multiple responses.

When asked, "Do you consider yourself an author?", 78 percent of the

responses were positive. The students' reasons included love of writing, making books, and using imagination. One student responded, "I think of stories just like that!" Students who responded negatively focused on lack of ideas and limited personal publishing.

When questioned about observations regarding the writing of others, 87 percent thought most people liked to write. According to the students, the reasons people write are for enjoyment, to communicate, to express feelings, for research, and in order to remember. Even though 93 percent noted that parents write, the students still saw parents' writing as work related as well as being used to pay bills, and for other family business rather than for personal communication and enjoyment.

Although students tend to write about topics and use formats from personal reading, only 45 percent stated that personal writing changed because of books read. The most popular authors mentioned as influencing student writing included Steven Kellogg, Cynthia Rylant, Beverly Cleary, and Dr. Seuss for the primary students and R.L. Stine and Ann M. Martin for the intermediate students. Children make decisions about what to write based on not only books read, but also movies, television, and ideas from school topic lists. Also impacting writing choices are such things as interest in sports, animals, humor, and life experiences. As one child said, "Ideas just pop into my head!"

Many students like to write anywhere quiet, whether it be at home or at school. Others prefer soft music or conferencing with peers for inspiration. Students stated that adequate time was essential for the writing process, and teachers have observed that the time set aside for writers' workshop has met the needs of most students.

Conclusions and Recommendations

In conclusion, the evidence of surveys, compared scored prompts, review of student portfolios, and teacher observation suggests that given more time, encouragement, and writing experiences students have come to enjoy an overall awareness of themselves and others as authors while developing resources from which inspiration can be gleaned. Given all the components of this research project, writing skills and attitudes have been positively impacted.

Assessment of students' writing skills and attitudes is still an area of challenge for future researchers. There is not enough available data to conclude what role maturation may have played in the growth students made in writing skills and attitude during this project. Despite these limitations, the experienced teachers conducting this project have learned that when students are given the time and turned loose to write on personally chosen topics, writing miracles can take place.

After reflecting on this information, the teachers make the following recommendations:

1. promote writing skills and positive attitude toward writing by implementing writers' workshop,
2. prepare physical components of writers' workshop well before the first day of school,
3. compile an organized collection of examples, models, plans, guidelines, etc. in a binder labeled for easy reference;
4. schedule writers' workshop time for 40 to 60 minutes on at least three consecutive days each week ,
5. establish the routine and format for writers' workshop during the first week of school and review when needed,

6. select or develop an interest survey to help students focus on possible topics,
7. provide a consistent daily time for journaling, perhaps following a constant such as recess or lunch,
8. introduce journaling during the first week,
9. maintain a permanent writing folder for each student and furnish an adequate and accessible storage space within the classroom,
10. require the students to periodically review and reflect upon the contents of the permanent writing folder,
11. attend pertinent workshops and read professional literature,
12. promote and support the implementation of writers' workshop throughout the school.

Those who use these recommendations to implement writers' workshop will experience the benefits and joys of helping children turn into authors. As one student stated, "People write so they can put their ideas somewhere," and this project was successful in doing just that!

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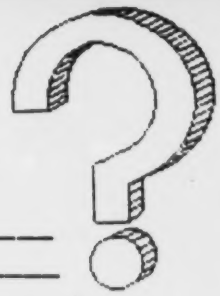
APPENDICES

WRITING PROMPT

Write about something that happened this summer that you will remember.



Appendix B

Attitude and Motivation Survey

Name_____
Date _____

1. Name the things that you like to do best in your free time.

_____
_____
_____
_____

2. Tell about the times that you see your parents writing.

_____
_____
_____
_____

3. When do you write in your personal life?(Not for school assignments)

_____
_____
_____
_____

4. Tell what you like about writing.

_____
_____
_____
_____

5. Tell what you dislike about writing.

_____
_____
_____
_____

6. List your favorite things to write about.

_____
_____
_____
_____

7. Tell about times that you have seen your teacher write.

_____
_____
_____
_____

8. Tell about times that you have written in school.

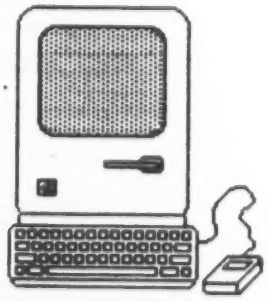
_____
_____
_____
_____

9. Tell how you feel when your teacher gives a writing assignment.

_____
_____
_____
_____

10. Do you have any of these at your house? Check the ones you have.

Computer _____ Modem _____ FAX machine _____



Name _____Date_____

Attitude and Motivation Survey

1. What do you like to do in your free time ?

   a. _____

   b. _____

   c. _____

2. When do you see your parents writing ?

   a. _____

   b. _____

   c. _____

3. When do you write in your personal life ?

   a. _____

   b. _____

   c. _____

4. What do you like about writing ?

   a. _____

   b. _____

   c. _____

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5. What do you dislike about writing ?

   a. _____

   b. _____

   c. _____

6. What are your favorite things to write about ?

   a. _____

   b. _____

   c. _____

7. When have you seen your teachers write ?

   a. _____

   b. _____

   c. _____

8. When have you written in school ?

   a. _____

   b. _____

   c. _____

9. How do you feel when your teacher give a writing assignment ?

   _____

   _____

   _____

   _____

10. Check which of the following you have at home:
    computer_____modem_____FAX machine_____

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Appendix C

August, 1994

Dear Colleagues,

As you may know, we are presently working towards completion of our Master's degree, and as part of our program, we are required to complete an Action Research Project. Our program partners and we have chosen the topic of improving children's writing ability.

We need your help. Would you please be kind enough to complete the attached survey and return it to Lynn's mailbox as soon as possible? It will be of great assistance to us in authenticating the need for continued work in this area.

Thank you very much in advance for your assistance.

TEACHER SURVEY

1. What do you like about teaching writing?

2. What do you dislike about teaching writing?

3. How many minutes a day do you teach writing?

4. How many minutes a day do you feel would be ideal?

5. In what subjects do you use writing?

6. In which subjects do you think writing should be a part?

7. When do you write in your personal life?

Appendix D

August, 1994

Dear Parent,

A little over a year ago, I entered a Master's degree program and have been working very diligently toward my goal of graduation in May, 1995. I hope that you will be as enthusiastic as I am that your children, my students, will be major contributors to the research project that is required for me to complete during this school year.

For the most part, the children will not even be aware that our daily activities are going to be an integral component of my project. My program partners, and I will be focusing on children's ability to improve their writing skills, and we have designed lessons which each of us will implement in daily lessons in our individual classrooms. Occasionally, your child may share some of our activities from the day, and we encourage you to ask questions about what we did in school.

Please feel free to contact me with any questions or suggestions you might have. I welcome your input, as your children and I work together toward a successful experience in Writers' Workshop for all of us this school year.

Sincerely,

Writing Survey for Parents

1. I write better than I speak.	YES	NO
2. When I have free time, I prefer writing to reading.	YES	NO
3. Studying grammar formally helps students improve their writing.	YES	NO
4. I leave notes for members of my family.	YES	NO
5. Girls and women enjoy writing more than boys or men.	YES	NO
6. Students who write well generally do better in school than those who don't.	YES	NO
7. If a paper has many misspellings, it should receive a low grade.	YES	NO
8. I revise what I've written.	YES	NO
9. Doing workbook exercises helps students improve their writing.	YES	NO
10. Someone who writes well is more successful in the world than someone who doesn't.	YES	NO
11. I like what my child writes.	YES	NO
12. Writing is a very important way for students to express their feelings.	YES	NO
13. I write better than I read.	YES	NO
14. A sloppy paper should receive a lower grade.	YES	NO
15. I reread what I've written.	YES	NO
16. Writing helps one to learn.	YES	NO
17. I write letters to my family and friends.	YES	NO
18. Correctness is more important than content in students' writing.	YES	NO

WRITING DEVELOPMENT CHART
With "key" Words

	Absent 1	Attempted 2	Partially Developed 3	Adequately Developed 4	Developed 5	Well-Developed 6
FOCUS Degree to which main idea/theme or point of view is clear and maintained.	Unclear; absent; insufficient length to ascertain maintenance	Confusing; attempted; main point unclear or shifts	"Underpromise, overdeliver"; "overpromise, underdeliver"; infer; two or more positions without unifying statement	Bare bones; position clear; main point clear	Generally previewed	All main points are specified and maintained.
SUPPORT Degree to which main point/ elements are elaborated and/or explained by evidence and detailed reasons.	No support; insufficient	Attempted; unrelated list	Some points elaborated; may be a list of related specifics; most are general	Some second-order elaboration; some are general	Most points elaborated	All major points elaborated with specific second-order support.
ORGANIZATION Degree to which logical flow of ideas and explicitness of the plan are clear and connected.	No plan; insufficient length to ascertain maintenance	Attempted; plan is noticeable	Not knowledgeable in paragraphing	Some cohesion and coherence from relating to topic; plan is clear	Most points connected; coherent; cohesive using various methods	All points connected and signaled with transitions and/or other cohesive devices.
CONVENTIONS Use of conventions of standard English.*	Many errors, cannot read, confused meaning; problems with sentence construction; insufficient length to ascertain maintenance	Many major errors, confusion	Some major errors, many minor; sentence construction below mastery	Developed; few major errors, some minor, meaning unimpaired; mastery of sentence construction	A few \minor errors, but no more than one major error	No major errors, one or two minor errors.
INTEGRATION	Does not present most or all features; insufficient length	Attempts to address assignment; confusion	Partially developed; some or one feature not developed	Essentials present	Features present, but not all equal	All features evident and equally well developed.

*Usage, sentence construction, spelling, punctuation/capitalization, paragraph format.

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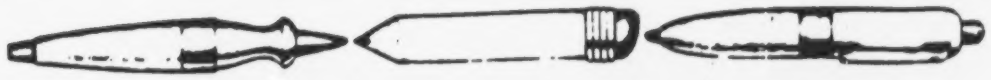
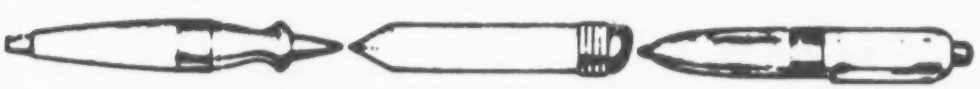


HOW TO HELP YOUR CHILD BECOME A BETTER WRITER

1. Build a climate of words at home.
2. Let children see you write often.
3. Rejoice in effort, delight in ideas, and resist the urge to correct your child's writing.
4. Provide a suitable place for children to write.
5. Give, and encourage others to give, the child gifts associated with writing.
6. Encourage (but do not demand) frequent writing.
7. Praise the child's efforts at writing.
8. Share letters from friends and relatives.
9. Encourage the child to write away for information, free samples, or travel brochures.
10. Be alert to occasions when the child can be involved in writing.

From the National Council of Teachers of English



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10 WAYS TO SET THE WRITE ATTITUDE

1. ***Write to your children.*** Put notes in lunchboxes, in bookbags, under pillows, in pockets, on bikes, on the TV—in any surprising places.
2. ***Let your children see you write.*** This means everything: letters, memos, grocery lists, cards.
3. ***Write with your children.*** Let them see you make mistakes and revise. They'll realize that writing takes time, and that rewriting is sometimes necessary.
4. ***Talk with your children before they write.*** Probe, prompt, praise, and question them to help them process the knowledge they already possess.
5. ***Encourage your young author to draw.*** Besides clarifying thoughts and ideas, drawing tells stories and expresses feelings. It also reinforces the motor skills young children need for writing.
6. ***Encourage your children to take risks with writing.*** Young writers need to experiment with new words and to have faith in their ideas.
7. ***Let your children know they have something to say.*** They need to realize that their skills, accomplishments, and feelings are worthy and worth writing about.
8. ***Emphasize the fun of writing.*** Help your children discover the joy of accomplishment in choosing the right word, picking a good example, creating a vivid image, completing an engaging work.
9. ***Listen to your children read their writings.*** Offer praise and support for their efforts and accomplishments.
10. ***Read to your children.*** Read books, stories, magazines, comic strips, poems. And encourage your children to read. The more children are exposed to other people's writing, the more background they'll have for their own.

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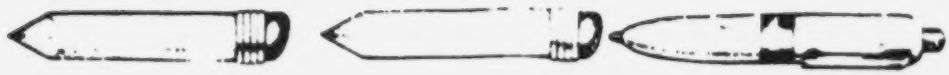
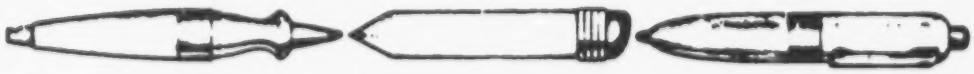


12 WRITE IDEAS

1. ***Dinner Wishes.*** Give your children paper plates on which to write menus for their favorite dinners. Hang these up until you've made the special meals.
2. ***Dinner Riddles.*** Write a riddle about what you're serving for dinner and have the children write their guesses. Whoever's right gets extra dessert. (Example: It's green and made of cut-up vegetables. You pour a liquid on it to add flavor. What is it?)
3. ***Chore Chart.*** Post a "Help Wanted" sign so your sometimes-hesitant helpers can list specific household chores that need to be done. As the assigned family members do these, have the children cross them off.
4. ***Prose and Poetry Place Mats.*** Give each child paper to create a place mat decorated with writing. The children can write a poem or story, something they'd like to talk about, something they learned in school that day, or just words.
5. ***Calendar Capers.*** Set up a weekly calendar with space for your children to write daily reminders about activities and special events.
6. ***Winning Words.*** Pin, tie, or tape a "blue ribbon of excellence" on a child to reward a special accomplishment. Have the child write the accomplishment on the ribbon.
7. ***Creative Cards.*** Instead of buying birthday, thank-you, and other cards, keep colored paper, markers, sequins, stars, and the like available. Then your children can create their own cards and write their own special messages.
8. ***Personal Postcards.*** Keep a box of postcards collected from trips or outings. Encourage your children to occasionally write one to a friend or relative telling about their day.
9. ***Writing Wrap.*** When giving a gift, have your children decorate plain, colored wrapping paper with assorted messages that suit the receiver or the season.
10. ***Arrival Surprise.*** Have the kids make a welcome-home note for Dad or Mom and tape it to the front door.
11. ***Midday Memo.*** Make some "memo" paper and suggest that your children write notes to put in Mom's or Dad's briefcase or lunchbox.
12. ***Have-a-Nice-Day Diary.*** Before a child's bedtime, write together in a journal about the events of the day. It's a great way to keep in touch with your child's concerns, likes, and dislikes.



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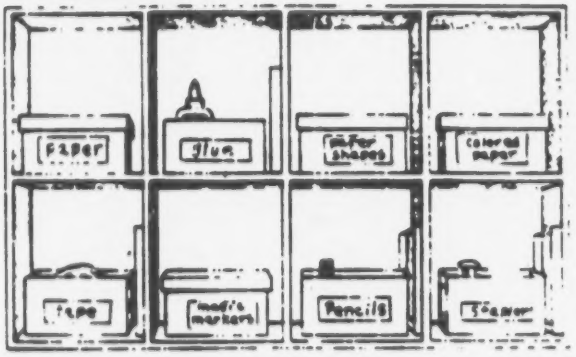
THE WRITE PLACE

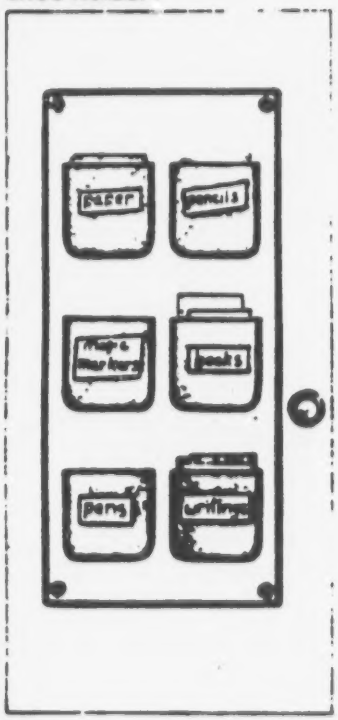
You can help your children feel comfortable about writing by setting aside a special area at home. Stock it with pencils, pens, crayons, chalk, felt-tip pens, writing paper, a stapler, tape, glue, and decorative papers of various sizes, shapes, and colors. Store these materials on a section of a table, dresser, or desk.

Or how about...

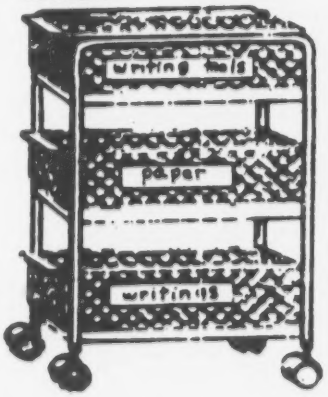
...in a set of shoe boxes in a closet?



...in a bedroom-door shoe holder?



...in movable trays in a corner?



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Appendix G

MATERIALS FOR WRITING AND PUBLISHING

I. Paper of different sizes, weights, colors and textures:
- Lined papers (of various sizes, colors, and types)
- Construction paper
- Xerox paper
- Colored bond
- Drawing paper
- Stationery and envelopes (an assortment)
- Graph paper
- Index cards
- Scratch paper
- Poster board and oak tag
- Other (e.g. Post It notes, butcher paper, blank labels, etc.)

II. Writing implements of various sizes, colors, and styles:
- Regular pencils
- Colored pencils
- Crayons
- Markers (broad-tipped, fine-tipped, etc.)

III. General supplies and equipment:
- Erasers
- Staplers
- Staple removers
- Paper clips and brass fasteners
- Scissors
- Transparent and masking tapes
- White glue and glue sticks
- Rulers and yardsticks
- Paper punches
- Rubber bands and thumbtacks
- Clipboards
- Rubber date stamp and pad
- Book display stands or racks
- Tape recorder and blank tapes
- Overhead projector, transparencies, and markers

IV. Resource and reference materials:
- Dictionaries
- Thesaurus
- Classroom libraries of encyclopedias and other reference books; literature in a variety of modes; magazines
- Classroom libraries and displays of student authors' publications

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Appendix H

WRITERS' WORKSHOP RULES, ROLES, WORKSHOP AREA

Rules:

1. Writers will **neatly** replace all of the supplies in the correct place.
2. During Workshop writers will discuss only their writing and writing processes.
3. Writers will use the correct areas of the room for writing and discussing.
4. Writers will **ALWAYS** do their best work.
5. Writers will not get in the way of another writer's work.

Roles:

1. Writer: You will become an author of your own writing.
2. Suggester: You will give other writers helpful ideas for their writing.
3. Editor: You will correct your own work as well as helping other writers correct their work.

Workshop Area:

The Writers' Workshop area will be split into Conference Areas where writers may discuss ideas and peer edit. The areas marked as No Man's Land are areas where a writer can do silent writing with no interruptions. At times you will meet with the teacher or other writers. You will always be writing. You should always have something to work on in your writing folder.

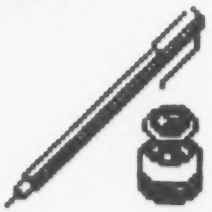
WHAT GOOD WRITERS DO...

Good writers

- always do their best work.
- write on one side of the paper.
- skip lines when they write.
- **NEVER** erase. Instead, they cross out the word and write the new word above it.
- save **EVERYTHING!** This means they save all drafts and all notes about their writing.
- know that they have choices in their writing.

Good Writers...

- always do their best work.
- write on one side of the paper.
- skip lines when they write.
- never erase.
- save everything!
- know they have choices in their writing.



TWO REASONS TO SHARE OUR WRITING

1. We get used to sharing our thoughts.

2. Other writers can learn from us and help us.

WORKSHOP RULES

Writers will neatly replace all supplies.

During Workshop, writers will discuss only their writing and writing processes.

Writers will use the correct areas of the room for writing and discussing.

Writers will ALWAYS do their best work.

Writers will not get in the way of another writer's work.

Appendix I

DAY 5 TOPICS LIST

We'll always begin Writers' Workshop with a group meeting. Every day I'll give you a tip or lesson about what good writers do. Sometimes it might include a skill lesson which involves editing or revising your writing. Other times it might include some strategies to make your writing better as far as content.

Today I knew that I would be writing with you. I began rehearsing--thinking about the stories I could tell in writing.

(Teacher models 3 choices that are possibilities for writing.)

Examples: Pets
Vacations
Any personal experience or interest

(Teacher models 1 choice that is not a possibility for writing.) I can't tell about that topic. I don't know anything about_____. I'm going to write about topics I know about--those are the stories I can really tell well.

Now I want you to think as I did this morning about all the topics you can write about. Think about moments in your life you remember well and want to share with your friends.

Think silently for 3 minutes. You may write notes for reminders.

Now, turn to a partner and take just 2 minutes to quickly tell your partner what you are thinking of writing about.

Time's up. Change roles and take another 2 minutes for you partner to tell you his/her ideas.

Time's up again. Let's share ideas for writing with the whole group.

(During group share, the teacher helps students to narrow their focus.)

Today I want you to begin a list of topics to be kept in your writing folder.

Appendix J

DAY 6 CHOOSING ONE TOPIC

Yesterday we rehearsed personal topics that we could write about. Today we're going to recopy our list into the "writing folder" that I am passing to you. Please look inside at the page listed "Topics". On this page you will list your writing ideas. You can add more topic pages as needed. (Students recopy personal topics onto page.)

Now, we're going to choose one topic to write about. Look over your list and choose one topic to write about. Put a star by it.

Teacher then demonstrates use of graphic organizers (clustering, word bank, VENN diagram, mind mapping, etc.) using her topic choice as an example.

Teacher reminds students to refer to "Rules for Writing" chart before beginning their writing.

Teacher and students begin writing about chosen topic. Teacher writes for about 5-10 minutes and then quietly walks around the room conferring with students who are having difficulty getting started.

Appendix K

DAY 7 OPTIONS FOR SHARING

We will always begin Writers' Workshop with a group meeting for the mini lesson. We will always end our Writers' Workshop with a group share time. At this time, we will listen and respond to each other's writing.

These are the rules we will follow for group share:

1. The writer will sit in the author's chair.
2. The other students will face the author's chair.
3. Papers are placed face down when you're not sharing.
4. Watch the face of the reader as your classmate shares with the with the group.

Writers may use the share time for different purposes. There may be several authors who wish to share their whole draft. Perhaps an author wants to share only a lead, dialogue, descriptive passage, or action scene. The author will want the listeners to check for understanding. Another purpose might be to share a skill modeled during the mini-lesson that the writer was able to use in the draft. The author should tell the listeners the purpose for sharing before beginning to read the draft.

After listening to a writer's piece, listeners may respond to the piece in a positive way, ask questions about the meaning, or give thoughtful, helpful suggestions.

(Teacher should model positive responses during share time to students understand what that means.)

I'm looking forward to hearing your pieces during group share time today.

Appendix L

DAY 8 REVISION PRACTICE

Today I want to share a writing tip with you. (Project the following sample using the overhead projector.)

> We had a lot of fun at the zoo. We saw lots of animals and ate a lot of food. We had a good time.

I have a hard time picturing exactly what the writer means. I would enjoy reading this more if the author would use more details. I would like to hear about the giraffe licking bugs off the bark of the trees and the monkeys that chased each other on the rocks. Instead of telling us about eating a lot of food, I would like to have seen the hot dog dripping with ketchup, mustard, and pickles and the chocolate ice cream cones.

I'd like you to listen to this excerpt written by a writer learning to add details. (Project the following sample using the overhead or simply read to the class.)

> The sun was like fire on my skin, blazing hot. It's the kind of heat you can't shut out, even with the windows and doors closed, fan and air conditioning on. It just bounced off the pond and gave radiant colors. The birds began chirping as if to say, "It is so hot!" The animals huddled in shade if they could find it. Their skin was crinkly like an old man's face, and looked like only water would soothe it. All of a sudden I saw clouds coming this way. I held my breath and closed my eyes. "Maybe, maybe." I hoped. I suddenly felt light water on my face. Soon it was heavier. It was pouring.

So, when you are writing, remember to add details. If you don't add details during writing, you can add them afterward, during revision, when you reread your piece.

Together with students add details to the first sample paragraph.

You might want to reread your pieces today searching for places where you could be more specific.

The sun was like fire on my skin, blazing hot. It's the kind of heat you can't shut out, even with the windows and doors closed, fan and air conditioning on. It just bounced off the pond and gave radiant colors. The birds were huddled in shade if they could find it. Their skin was crinkly like an old man's face, and looked like only water would soothe it. All of a sudden I saw clouds coming this way. I held my breath and closed my eyes. "Maybe, maybe." I hoped. I suddenly felt light water on my face. Soon it was heavier. It was pouring.

Appendix M

DAY 9 PURPOSE

A writer chooses to write for many reasons. Four possibilities are:

1. To entertain — The writer wants the reader to enjoy a piece of writing. Examples would be short stories, poems, fairy tales, and mysteries

2. To narrate personal experiences or feelings (Personal Narrative)
   The writer wants to share events that have meaning in his/her life with the reader.

3. To inform (Expository)
   The writer wants to give information or explain something. Examples are found in your social studies or science texts.

4. To persuade (Persuasive)
   The writer wants to urge the reader to do something. Examples are letters to the editor and ads.

Teacher reads the following prompts and asks the students to decide what the purpose for writing would be.

> Some people enjoy summer and some enjoy winter. Decide which season you like most and write an essay convincing others that your choice is best.
>
> Summer, fall, winter, and spring offer a variety of weather and things to do. Choose your favorite season and tell why you personally enjoy that time of the year.
>
> In this area we have four seasons. Write an essay which tells facts about some changes which take place in areas where four seasons occur.
>
> The sights, the sounds, the smells of each season trigger many feelings and memories. Pick a season and write a poem about it.

Before beginning to write, authors must think about the purpose of their writing. Be sure to know the purpose of your writing.

DAY 9 AUDIENCE

Writers need to keep not only their purpose for writing in mind but also who their audience will be. Here are a few possibilities:

preschool child
classmate
parent
teacher
friend
pen pal
President of the United States
mayor of city
class in a different grade
principal
grandma/grandpa
aunt/uncle
cousin

As you can see from this list, the needs of these audiences would be different. Writers need to keep those needs in mind. Word choice, details, examples, and tone would be different depending on the audience. For example, if you were writing a letter to the President, you would not begin with "Dear Bill". A letter to a friend would not start with "Dear Sir". As you write, keep purpose and audience in mind.

More Prompts for Practicing Purpose

PETS

Your family is trying to decide whether or not to get a pet. Write an essay convincing your family of your decision. Try to persuade them that it would be a wise decision, or that it would not be.

You are entering an essay contest sponsored by a pet food company. The purpose is to explain how to take care of a pet at home. It must be written so that it can be included in a book called Pet Facts.

Your pet dog and your pet rabbit have both disappeared. What has happened to them? Where have they gone? Write a mystery about this subject.

Your class is writing a book about pets and the enjoyment they bring into people's lives. Write an essay sharing some personal experiences and feelings about your pet.

You and your friends are having a debate about whether a dog or a cat would make a better pet. Write an essay stating reasons for your opinion, and try to persuade others to agree with you.

FOODS

Your class is designing a book of important facts and information about the food groups and healthy food. Write an essay explaining the food groups and giving examples of foods in each group.

Your parents suggest that pizza should no longer be served at your house. Write an essay to convince them that you agree or disagree with that suggestion.

The local restaurant has set up an essay contest. The restaurant owners will serve a free meal to the person who best describes his or her favorite meal listed on the menu. Write an essay telling your favorite meal and why you really enjoy it.

Think about what foods might be served in the future. Write a short story about a family of the future preparing the meal and sitting down to eat.

Your friend and you are planning a party. However, you are disagreeing over what dessert should be served at the party. Write an essay to persuade or convince your friend of your choice.

Appendix N

DAY 10 MODEL SELF- AND PEER-EDITING

Today I'm going to show you how to self- and peer-edit a piece of writing.

To self-edit:

1. Make sure each page has your name and date at the top
2. Number the pages in order.
3. Read your work to yourself.
4. Read your work to yourself again and use the self-editing checklist.

(Teacher shows and explains use of editing checklist and the editing marks. Teacher then models self-editing, using a paragraph written with mistakes.)

Once you have finished self-editing, you need to peer-edit Peer-editing involves another student in the class looking at your writing to help you find mistakes. Peer-editing follows the same steps as self-editing. The peer editor:

1. Makes sure your name and date are on the top of each page.
2. Makes sure the numbered pages are in order.
3. Reads your work and uses the other side of the editing checklist.
4. Suggests corrections.

(Teacher models peer-editing using the sample paragraph used for self-editing.)

Students affix a chart of the editing marks in their writing folder.

Appendix O

DAY 11 SELF-EDITING PRACTICE

I'd like you to self-edit a piece of writing today, using the self-editing checklist.

(Teacher reviews the use of the checklist and the editing marks.)

When you have finished put your writing and the checklist in your writing folder, so you'll be able to find it quickly for tomorrow's Writers' Workshop.

Appendix P

DAY 12 PEER-EDITING PRACTICE

I'd like you to find a partner to peer-edit with. Remember the peer-editor:

1. Checks that date and author's name are on each page.
2. Checks that pages are numbered and in order.
3. Reads work and uses checklist.
4. Makes helpful suggestions.

When peer-editing is finished, you are to paperclip the checklist to the piece of writing and place in the editing box.

Appendix Q

DAY 13 DETAILS

Sometimes when working on adding details in writing, it helps to talk to someone about the topic, then rewrite the draft without looking back at the previous versions. Here is what one writer did after talking about the experience:

First Draft:

My calico kitten, Pandy, is so cute. Her nose is dotted black, white, and pink. Her fur is very soft. She meows and purrs. She smells like perfume when I put it on her. She always plays with my hair bands. Pandy is adorable.

Revision:

My calico kitten, Pandy, is so cute. Her nose is so adorable. It's dotted black, white, brown, and pink. Her fur is as soft as clouds. She meows a lot, but she purrs more. She smells like flowers when I put perfume on her, but most of the time she smells like a veterinarian's office. She always plays with my hair bands, and I don't know where she gets them. Pandy is adorable, but her cute nose can sometimes lead to mischief.

Today if you would like to "talk over" your topic with a friend to clarify images or add details, move to the conference area without paper or pencils.

First Draft:

My calico kitten, Pandy, is so cute. Her nose is dotted black, white, and pink. Her fur is very soft. She meows and purrs. She smells like perfume when I put it on her. She always plays with my hair bands. Pandy is adorable.

Revision:

My calico kitten, Pandy, is so cute. Her nose is so adorable. It's dotted black, white, brown, and pink. Her fur is as soft as clouds. She meows a lot, but she purrs more. She smells like flowers when I put perfume on her, but most of the time she smells like a veterinarian's office. She always plays with my hair bands, and I don't know where she gets them. Pandy is adorable, but her cute nose can sometimes lead to mischief.

Appendix R

DAY 14 PEER-CONFERENCING

Conferencing is a very important part of Writers' Workshop. When a writer needs help with a piece of writing, s/he requests a peer conference by writing his/her name on the chalkboard. The 2 writers will use a conference area. The writer that needed the conference will read his/her work to the other writer. The job of the other writer is to listen for areas that seem confusing. When the piece has been heard, the listener then becomes a suggester.

The suggester will give ideas to the writer for making parts of the piece clearer or more interesting. The writer will write these ideas in the margin and decide how to use them later.

Remember, the person requesting the conference will:

1. Sign name on the chalkboard.
2. Wait for a conferencer to come to him/her.
3. Work on other writing while waiting.
4. Go to conference area when conferencer is ready.
5. Have conferencer sign name at top of first page.
6. Read writing.
7. Listen to conferencer's questions.
8. Answer questions to help conferencer understand writing.
9. Listen to suggestions.
10. Write ideas in the margins.
11. Thank conferencer.
12. Return to seat and try to use the suggestions.

Appendix S

MINI LESSONS

PROCEDURES:	CRAFT:	STRATEGIES:
Teacher's role	Why we have writers' workshop	How to edit and proofread
Student's role	What is writing process?	End-stop punctuation
Teacher's expectations	What do writers do when they rehearse, draft, revise, edit, and proofread?	The dash and colon
Rules for writers' workshop	Where do ideas come from?	Double dashes
Pattern for each workshop	Questions to produce writing topics	Exclamation points
How the room is organized	Ideas for getting unstuck	Semi-colon
Classroom writing resources (dictionaries, spellers, address file, author info., places to publish, clipboards, stationery, editing tools, white-out, paper, etc.)	Genres: what's possible, & qualities	Coma splices & run-ons
Daily writing folder and purpose	Purposes for writing: why authors write	Apostrophes to show possession and contraction
Permanent writing folder and purpose	Revising vs. recopying & when to start a completely new draft	Punctuating dialogue
Organization of folders	Revision methods (Carets, arrows, spider legs, number codes, cut-and-tape, etc.) & skipping lines when drafting	Splitting words between lines
Topic ideas list	Grabbing leads & different kinds	Using dictionaries, spellers, rhyming dictionaries, theesuruses, etc.
Skills/proofreading list	Satisfying conclusions	Prose margins
Modes of publication	Alternative leads & conclusions	Margins on poetry
Status-of-the-class inventory	Brainstorming titles: Murray's 50	Poetic formats & line break
What to do when you've "finished"	Qualities of a good title	Consistent point of view
Editing checklist	Flashbacks and flashforwards	Consistent verb tenses
Teacher's baskets	Information: too little, too much, & out of order, embedding context	Paragraphing (¶)
Why we confer about writing	Transitions & transitional words	Underlining & italicizing
Conferring with oneself	Focus & the need for specifics	Pronoun usage
Conferring with teacher	Narrative points of view	Irregular verbs
Conferring with peers	Ways of planning & organizing information	Assorted homonyms
Response forms	Reflecting: putting oneself into the piece	Assorted spelling demons
Procedures and agendas for group shares	Developing a main character	Spelling patterns & strategies
Peer conference areas	Keys to writing fiction	Friendly letter format
Self-evaluation procedures	Professional authors' processes	Business letter format
Goalsetting	Realistic dialogue	Addressing an envelope
Why the room is silent	Dedications, epilogues, prologues	Parentheses
	About-the-authors	Parentheses within parentheses
		Treatment of titles
		Capitalization of titles
		Strong nouns & precise verbs
		Passive vs. active constructions

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MINI LESSONS

PROCEDURES:
Self Editing
Purposes
Brainstorming
Peer Editing
Audience
Clustering

PERSONAL NARRATIVE:
Topics
Details (6)
Typical-action Leads
Topic Selection
Leads (6)
Show, Not Tell Details (6)

FICTION:
Setting (2)
Character Actions
Character Thoughts
Conflict
Climax
Point of View (2)
Theme
Character (Author)
Character Reactions to Others
Problem Solution
Story Map
Mood
Dialogue
Titles

LANGUAGE:
Nouns
Verb Tense
Adjectives
Whisper Reading
Dividing Sentences
Run-on Sentences
Similes
Friendly Letter
Envelope
Verbs
Strong, Precise Nouns and Verbs
Adverbs
Sentence Fragments
Sentence Expansion
Sentence Combining
Metaphors
Business Letter

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Date: _____

This is something I am proud of.

Date: _____

This is an example of

_____

(you fill in)

Date: _____

This is something I worked hard on.

Date: _____

I learned something when I wrote this.

Date: _____

This was my first time to do this.

Date: _____

This is a rough draft.

PUBLISHING FORM

Student's Name:_____
Teacher's Name:_____
Date (sent to LRC):_____

1. What is the title of your book?

   _____

2. Do you want space left on your cover page for an illustration?
   yes no

3. What would you like the Dedication page to say?

   _____

4. Do you want the writing on the story pages to be at the top or middle or bottom of the page? top middle bottom

5. What would you like the About the Author page to say?
   (Please write on the back of this paper)

6. Do you need the typed pages back to illustrate before we bind them?
   yes no

7. What color cover do you want?

   blue green yellow orange red purple pink brown black white

8. Have you checked your spelling?
   Have you clearly marked where you want your pages to begin and end?

Any other comments or instructions please write below.

Writing Survey

Name: _____ Date: _____

1. Do you consider yourself an author? Why? Why not?

2. Why do you think people write?

3. Do you think most people like to write?

4. Do your parents write? If so, what do they usually write?

5. Who is your favorite author? Why?

6. Are there any books by a particular author that have changed the way you write?

7. How do you decide what you're going to write about?

8. What are your favorite topics to write about?

9. When and where do you like to write?

10. What helps you to write?

Writing Survey

Name_____Date_____

1. Do you consider yourself an author? Why? Why not?

_____

_____

_____

2. Why do you think people write?

_____

_____

_____

3. Do you think most people like to write?

_____

4. Do your parents write? If so, what do they usually write?

_____

_____

_____

5. Who is your favorite author? Why?

_____

_____

_____

6. Are there any books by an author that have changed the way you write?

_____

_____

_____

7. How do you decide what you're going to write about?

_____

_____

_____

8. What are your favorite topics to write about?

_____

_____

_____

9. When and where do you like to write?

_____

_____

_____

10. What helps you to write?

_____

_____

_____

Writing Prompt

Write about something that happened during a winter that you will remember.